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How Envisionment of the Future Influences Professional Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study of Students' Graduate Work in a Social Science Field

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How Envisionment of the Future Influences Professional Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study of Students' Graduate Work in a Social Science Field

by

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13

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How Envisionment of the Future Influences Professional Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study of Students' Graduate Work in a Social Science Field

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This dissertation study is a longitudinal qualitative investigation of how graduate students in a social science field construct their professional identity. Among the different identities that individuals construct and have imposed upon them, their professional identity may be more distinct as compared to other identities such as gender roles, position of caretaker, and ethnicity that may develop over a longer period of time and be more diffuse. One's professional identity is likely to become a central identity because it provides agency, power, and a socially respected position in a particular disciplinary field and in society at large.

This investigation of graduate students' disciplinary development was designed to contribute to a better understanding of the process of professional identity development. Doctoral students in a social science field were chosen as participants because they were likely to undergo intensive identity construction processes in a short time period of time. In this staggered longitudinal study, the total number of participants was 34. Participants were tracked across milestones over at least two semesters of their program. Data collection included multiple interviews, member checking, and observation of students' activities in content classes, research meetings, social gatherings, and professional conference participation according to distinct stages that occur over time.

Analyzed using grounded theory methodology, data are presented in three themes representing significant influences on professional identity development. For the first

theme, graduate students' professional identity seemed to progress through phases marked by milestones. In Theme 2, graduate students' professional identity seemed to develop through interactions with other individuals in several learning communities. In Theme 3, graduate students seemed to forge their professional identity through their program experiences, defining their professional self as the acquisition of self-knowledge and self-regulation skills (being professional), disciplinary knowledge and skills (being a professional), and envisionment of a professional future self participating in a community of practice.

Development of professional disciplinary skills including disciplinary discourse practices appeared as a core contributor for students' professional identity development. Generalizable professional skills seemed more subtle and foundational for the other two factors (professional skills acquisition and professional affiliation). Individuals who developed both professional skills and professional affiliation seemed to have a strong professional identity. In addition, data indicated that as graduate students underwent the professional identity process, they seemed more motivated to take up their academic responsibilities and participate in their professional field. In sum, the contribution of this study is that different influences on graduate students' professional identity development were shown, and a clearer view of the overall professional identity development process was obtained, including what factors are influencing graduate students' professional identity development as well as their possible future self in their disciplinary community of practice.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The research on identity/identities has proliferated in several different fields, including psychology, anthropology, literacy, education, sociology, communication, and business, among others. Each field has provided different perspectives on what identity is and how it evolves (Gee, 2001). Such diversity of views can make it challenging to respect different schools of thought on the central and peripheral phenomena associated with identity and its development, and the definition of identity and description of its construction and development have remained underdeveloped. In this dissertation project, I applied a perspective on identity development that has portrayed the process as multiple, fluid, laminated, and negotiated to an investigation of how educational psychology graduate students constructed their professional identity throughout their graduate studies.

In the next section, I provide a brief review of the broad literature on professional identity construction, focusing on graduate studies as a context in which professional identity construction can occur, and I discuss previous views of the construct of identity. I then move to the specific rationale for my study and the broad research questions guiding the study.

Framework

Professional Identity Development

Among the different identities that make up an individual's lived experiences, the person's *professional identity* represents attributes, beliefs, values, motives, specialized

experiences, skills, and education associated with his/her work or professional career (Ibarra, 1999). Brott and Myers (1999) represented professional identity as the outcome of a professional skills developmental process that primes individuals to understand, practice, and participate in their profession. Hall (1987) explained that formation of a professional identity is enhanced by two major influences. First, when individuals associate with others in the same profession, as when they participate in meetings or conferences that relate to their professional field, they acquire related information that influences their own professional identity. Second, professional identity can be enhanced by discipline-related experiences that increase proficiencies. Schein (1978) suggested that individuals' priorities and self-understanding are influenced by their work and personal experiences.

Among different professional areas, graduate programs have special characteristics for an investigation of professional identity development due to the diverse multidisciplinary environments, the significance of social influences, and the requirement of certain skill sets before students may graduate and work in the field (Ducheny, Alletzhauser, Crandell, & Schneider, 1997). For these reasons, some professional identity development researchers have given special attention to this particular group. Ducheny and colleagues (1997) suggested that graduate student professional identity development typically involves primary elements: (a) the importance of continuing training and familiarity with relevant research, which is the most commonly mentioned component of professional development, and (b) the influence of learning communities. Additionally, because most doctoral students undergo

a qualifying process, a dissertation stage, and a job searching process, their professional development acquires stage-like properties with significant task completion requirements or critical, identity-relevant events. Finally, individuals' beliefs, values, areas of interest, and their professional and personal needs are essential components of professional development as graduate students (Miller, 1992).

Previous Views on Identity

Historically, two different approaches on identity/identities have been pursued, a developmental approach and a socio-cultural approach. As a central figure of the developmental approach to identity, Erikson (1959) introduced the concept of chronological developmental stages in identity construction. His theories on identity development focused mainly on the adolescence period because he believed this stage to be a key transitional period of development following childhood and leading to adulthood. Erikson posited that when individuals go through each stage, they may experience different characteristic psychological crises. Another developmental psychologist, Marcia (1966) focused on a view of identity that characterized it as involving four statuses (instead of stages), namely *identity diffusion*, *foreclosure*, *moratorium*, and *identity achievement*. These ideas of identity were taken up by a long line of researchers and thinkers providing further characterization of these perspectives on identity and self-concept (Berzonsky, 1988; Kroger, 2000; Schwartz, 2001; Sokol, 2009).

By contrast, the socio-cultural view of identity was introduced by such researchers as Mead (1934) and Merton (1957) who emphasized identity as a social

product. This perspective on identity has also been pursued by many researchers in different fields, and it may be on the ascendance when compared to the developmental perspective. In the field of psychology, Vygotsky (1932) introduced the idea of the development of mind as embedded in a child's culture and subcultures, of the tool-mediated development of individual characteristics, and of learning as occurring in the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, the development of mind is an interaction between individuals and surrounding cultures through the mediation of cultural artifacts such as discourse practices.

As another contribution to a social-cultural view on identity, Bakhtin (1981) provided a description of the relationship between identity and discourse practices. He described how individuals are intuitively inspired to expand their social boundaries through discourse interactions with others, so that individuals acquire different perspectives and resources as they develop new identities.

Individuals' identities develop and are maintained by continuing discourse processes. In a relevant application of these ideas, Schallert, Song, Jordan, et al. (2016) observed graduate students interacting with each other and with disciplinary resources and postulated that discipline-specific identity construction was a core contributor to students' development or growth in a particular discipline, even as disciplinary practices influenced identity construction. In this view, identity and disciplinary discourse activities have a reciprocal relationship with each other. These ideas echo those of Wenger (1998) who posited that identity formation is significantly associated with disciplinary practices. He claimed that when individuals are joining a community of

practice, they develop a new identity as they try to acquire the core disciplinary skills of the community.

Providing a way to synthesize these two historical lines of work on identities, the developmental and socio-cultural, Moje and Luke (2009) summarized different perspectives on identity/identities into five metaphors, with two (identity as self and identity as difference) reflecting the developmental perspective and with three metaphors (identity as narrative, as mind, and as positioning) reflecting the socio-cultural perspective. They also emphasized the characteristics of identity as multiple and fluid. In other words, individuals are said to possess many different identities that they project differently in different situations they face (Gee, 2011). Sometimes, individuals have to negotiate between the different identities and may come to reject one identity (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008).

Rationale for the Study

Having reviewed these different perspectives on identity, I have two reasons in support of the need for professional identity research. First, I postulated that this identity formation process would be thrown into particularly clear relief when individuals are going through new professional disciplinary training experiences. Professional identity development may be more distinct as compared to other identities such as gender roles, position of caretaker, and ethnicity that may develop over a longer time and be more diffuse (Moje & Luke, 2009). In addition, among many identities that an individual possesses, one's professional identity is likely to become a central identity because it provides a socially respected position, agency, and power in a disciplinary community

and in the society at large. Moje and Lewis (2004) introduced the idea of a relationship between identity, agency, and power, stating that identity development is influenced by the agency and power that individuals acquire through their experiences in different events. For adults, one of the critical identities that represent their agency and power in the world is their professional or work identity. Expressing an appreciation for the multidimensional nature of growth and advancement in a profession, Ducheny, Alletzhauser, Crandell, and Schneider (1997) explained professional identity as a sense of empowerment. In consideration of the significance of acquiring agency and power, which may create or enhance an individual's professional identity, an investigation of the processes involved when acquiring a professional identity may contribute to elucidating the general mechanisms of identity formation and development.

Second, because identity construction can be seen as embedded in the discourse of a particular context or community, fluency in discourse practices such as writing, reading, and communicating with other colleagues is one of the foundational professional skills that graduate students must acquire while they are in most academic graduate programs in order to become researchers and/or practitioners, and possibly future faculty members (Noll & Fox, 2003).

Thus, this investigation of graduate students' disciplinary development was designed to contribute to a better understanding of the process of professional identity development that most likely and eventually provides agency, power, and position to graduate students. In other words, a study of professional identity development would depend on a careful observation and analysis of the process of graduate students maturing

and evolving as a professional and of acquiring facility with the discourse relevant to their field.

In sum, I investigated educational psychology graduate students as they were developing a new professional identity. Because individuals in graduate school must undergo intensive identity construction processes in a short time period of time, I aimed to contribute to a better understanding of professional identity formation and negotiation processes. In this project, the focus was on students in an educational psychology graduate program that included sub-programs in what the department called *professional areas* (counseling and school psychology) and *academic areas* (development, learning, and cultural sciences).

Research Questions

Building on a synthesis of the work on *professional identity development* for this investigation, I was guided by the following overarching question: What is the process of professional identity development that graduate students experience as they begin, continue, and complete their graduate studies?

Organization of the Document

In this chapter, I have introduced my project, providing a brief overview of the relevant literature as well as the rationale for the study and research questions guiding the project. In Chapter 2, I introduce theoretical frameworks underlying my research that pertains to the theoretical and empirical literature on identity and identity construction, as well as the study of professional identity with an emphasis on disciplinary practices. I end this chapter with a section on the research on the unique training environment and

process of graduate studies. In Chapter 3, I detail my research design, describe the research methodology that I chose to address my research questions, and lay out a research protocol. Chapter 4 outlines my key findings by themes. Finally, in Chapter 5, I present a discussion of key findings as connected to previous theoretical and empirical work, I identify limitations of the study, and suggest implications for theory, future studies, and educational practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Historically, the place of an extensive literature review when one is conducting a grounded theory study has been an issue in the qualitative research community. Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced grounded theory as an approach to research that is not focused on the testing of hypotheses from existing theoretical frameworks but rather develops a new theory grounded in empirical data that are collected in the field. They explicitly advised against conducting a literature review at the beginning stage of a grounded theory study. In other words, they suggested that the researcher ignore or avoid acquiring knowledge about the existing literature in order to prevent bias. This stance is different from most research methodologies that build an essential theoretical foundation in the literature first and then undertake a study.

However, others have argued that there is a need for a substantial literature review to provide a rationale for conducting the study in the first place (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2005). In addition, once the data have been analyzed, a grounded theory researcher need to revisit the literature to connect one's findings to what has been presented in the literature before.

Especially for my study of professional identity development, a literature review on identity was needed because the understanding of the identity construct is somewhat unclear and diffuse and varies widely across fields. Thus, the literature review on general identity theory as well as professional identity was needed to be reviewed in order to make sense of the theoretical position of this study in the existing literature.

In this chapter, I review the theoretical and empirical literature and research on identity and identity construction, as well as the work on professional identity formation with an emphasis on disciplinary practices. I end the literature review with a section on the research on the unique training environment and process of graduate studies and how this environment and process may enhance and/or hinder individuals' professional identity construction. Before reviewing these bodies of work, however, I begin by considering definitions of several related terms.

Dealing with Terms

There are three clusters of terms that need to be addressed: *self* and *identity*, *identity construction* and *identity development*, and *professional development* and *professional identity development*. For the first pair, there exists a long line of discussion regarding the difference between the *self* and *identity* (Harter, 1990; Leary & Tangney, 2011; Owens, 2006; Swann & Bosson, 2010). Theory and research on the constructs of *self* and *self-concept* proliferated from the '50s until now, mainly in the fields of sociology, social psychology, and anthropology (Beijk, 1966; Gecas, 1982; Kinch, 1963; Marsh, 1990; Rosenberg, 1986; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984). Rosenberg (1986) defined the *self-concept* as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to the self as an object" (Rosenberg, 1986; p. 68). Further, several researchers developed multidimensional perspectives on the self-concept. (Keyes & Ryff, 2000; Marsh & O'Neill, 1984; Shavelson, Hubner & Stanton, 1976). The subsequent body of self-concept research has emphasized factors related to domain-specific self-efficacy beliefs (Göetz, Cronjäger, Frenzel, Lüdtke, & Hall, 2010; Guay,

Ratelle, Roy & Litalien, 2010) and to temperament or traits (Reddy, 2009; Sprinzen, 1976).

Researchers, especially in the field of sociology, personality psychology, and anthropology, have attempted to distinguish between *self* and *identity*, claiming that identity is composed of the elements that separate an individual from others, such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and occupation; whereas the *self* is an intrapersonal representation of an individual's quality as determined by one's attributes, values, and beliefs (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004; Harter, 1990; Owens, 2006). In contrast, the broad meaning of the term *identity* as including one's ideas about the self has been adopted for use by such disciplines as literacy, education, politics, psychology, science, and even engineering education (Bakhtin, 1953; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Carlone & Johnson, 2007; Moje & Luke, 2009; Tonso, 2006). The construct of identity has come to represent both personal perceptions of the self and internalized messages about the self that originate in one's environment (Schwartz, 2001; Schwartz, Klimstra, Luyckx, Hale, Frijns, & Meeus, 2011; Swann & Bosson, 2010).

In sum, the main way that *identity* differs from *self*, particularly in regard to my project, is that *identity* not only includes beliefs and perceptions of the self in terms of proficiencies and skills, but is also informed by relationships with the socio-cultural environment (e.g., faculty advisors, peers, clinic supervisors, parents, partners, friends, and the groups to which one aspires to (and does) belong, etc.). This occurs at intra-individual levels of identity (e.g., gender, ethnicity) but also at more inter-individual levels associated with group membership and social messages and positioning (e.g.,

graduate students, research group member, a particular university, specific practicum site). For the purposes of this project, with my interest in how graduate students come to identify as members of their macro-level occupational group by way of associating with a local sociocultural context that includes cohorts of graduate students, faculty members, and the disciplinary community field, the broader meaning of identity seems most useful.

A second terminology issue is the distinction between *identity construction* and *identity development*. Identity construction is often used interchangeably with identity formation, and both are distinguished from identity development. *Identity construction* is described as a single event or moment that impacts and contributes to an individual's identity whereas *identity development* refers to change across a period of time during which individuals experience different events of identity construction (Sokol, 2009). In other words, identity development has a broader meaning than identity construction (Sutherland & Markauskaite, 2010).

A third terminology issue that needs to be addressed is associated with the terms *professional identity* and *professional development.* The term *professional identity* has been used variously to describe professionalism, professional development, professional identity construction, and professional socialization (Ducheny, Allertzhauser, Crandell, & Schneider, 1997). For this reason, *professional identity development* has often been confused with the concept of *professional development,* which is widely used to describe the importance of continuing one's training and familiarity in a specific field, the influence of a supportive peer group or mentor, the organization of development into stages articulated by formative events, or level of training (Sutherland, Howard, &

Markauskaite, 2006). By contrast, another meaning of professional development refers to the changes that occur when individuals enter a professional field such as training to be a medical doctor, nurse, or graduate studies for future researchers, scientists, and faculty members (Smith & Robinson, 1995). The second meaning of professional development is closer to the meaning of professional identity development because *professional identity* has commonly been defined as an individual's professional self-concept and the social recognition that accrues from society, based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, specialized experiences, skills, and education that are associated with a particular field (Brott & Myers, 1999; Ibarra, 1999; Smith & Robinson, 1995).

The development of a professional identity requires combining individuals' personal identity made up of one's personal beliefs, values, goals, life experiences, different roles, and more, with new professional discipline-specific experiences (Healey & Hays, 2012). Because influences on professional identity development are varied and complex, it is necessary to address the current conceptualization of *identity* and *professional*.

The Construct of Identity from Different Perspectives

As I addressed above, because the construct of identity is complex, it is necessary to consider the different conceptualizations of identity and its formation that have been advanced. In this section, the construct of identity from the perspectives of different disciplines such as human development and discourse practices as well as identity as a product of sociocultural disciplinary enculturation are discussed.

According to Gee (1996), there are four ways to view *identity*: identity as nature, institution, discourse, and affinity, and each approach recognizes different power sources. For example, identity as nature is a state that develops from natural and biological factors. *Nature identity* can be explained as a matter of nature unfolding, and has less to do with what individuals have done and more to do with what they inherit at birth. *Institution identity* is identity that emanates from institutions to which an individual belongs, and power comes from one's position in the institution as well as the position of the institution in society. Gee's third perspective on identity is discursive or *discourse identity*, identity that is from the recognition of others, and it can be explained as ascription of an achievement. Gee explained that discourse is the key to gain and sustain recognition from others so that continuous development of discourse practices is mandatory for maintaining institutional identity as well. This perspective on identity can be linked to identity as narrative from Moje and Luke (2009). The fourth view on identity is *affinity identity*, which is identity emanating from individuals' own experiences and/or distinctive practices within affinity groups. *Affinity groups* are groups of individuals who share particular interests or who practice certain skills. Affinity groups allow members to have affiliation. Social identity (Tajefel & Turner, 1993), collective agency (Bandura, 2006), and community of practice perspectives (Wenger, 1998) seem related to this perspective. Finally, Gee emphasized that the four different identities (natural, institutional, discursive, and affinity) are mutually interconnected and influence each other.

Further, Moje and Luke (2009) introduced five metaphors to describe different perspectives on the construct of identity: as difference, as sense of self, as mind or consciousness, as narrative, and as position. These metaphors can provide conceptual frameworks for understanding identity, as the construct has been approached from two major perspectives, developmental and sociocultural (Moje & Luke, 2009). In the next two sections, I first introduce the two major approaches on identity, the developmental and sociocultural approaches. I then move to four related areas relevant to identity study, the work on social identity development, the construct of future possible selves and imagined communities of practice, the research on how discourse and identity are related, and finally the perspective on how identity development can be seen as a more specific variant of the broader process of learning and change.

Identity from a developmental perspective. Work on identity development from a psychological and developmental perspective first began with Erik Erikson's (1951) theory of the developmental stages of human life from birth through adulthood. Erikson claimed that identity development begins in childhood and gains prominence during adolescence because this stage of life includes physical growth, sexual maturation, and impending career choices. In addition, in this stage, adolescents must accomplish a dominant identity by integrating their prior experiences and characteristics before entering a stable identity. A developmental psychological view presents the components of identity as a sense of personal continuity and uniqueness from others. Individuals also desire to acquire a social identity based on their membership in various groups such as familial, ethnic, and occupational groupings. Erikson (1959) claimed that these identities

formed by belonging to certain groups satisfy the need for affiliation, and help individuals define themselves. Erikson's approach to identity development was linear along a timeline so that identity development can go forward or stop and rest, but eventually settles down when one has reached a fully mature stage as a human being. According to Erikson (1968), there are several factors that contribute to identity development, including one's cognitive skills, physical abilities, increasing independence, and interactions with one's neighborhood, communities, and schools. This approach emphasizes identity as formed through developmental stages rather than the fluidity and multiplicities of identity represented in later perspectives on identity.

Another developmental psychologist, Marcia (1966), saw identity as personal ego and proposed that it can affect an individual's cognitive performance, aspirations, self-esteem, and occupational commitment. His view of identity is distinguished from Erikson's theory in that, instead of chronological stages, identity development is characterized as involving four statuses, namely, identity diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and identity achievement.

First, in the diffusion state, individuals have no clear idea of their identity and make no commitment or experience crisis in this state. Second, identity foreclosure means that the individual blindly accepts a new identity and values as given by others. In this state, individuals will commit to an identity without searching for different identities or experiencing crisis. Third, identity moratorium is the state in which a person is going through an identity crisis, and commitment level is low. Lastly, the identity achievement state is one in which the person develops well-defined personal values and self-concepts.

Individuals will have a strong sense of ego identity with high commitment, and crisis may again arise. Marcia (1993) claimed that identity construction begins during childhood by developing skills, beliefs, and identifications with social groups, and it has continuity with the past and direction for the future.

Lastly, Markus (1977) approached the idea of identity as an individual's organized, summarized, and explained behavior resulting in a cognitive framework about the self that can be called the *self-schema*. This conceptual understanding of identity is based on the idea of past social experiences that organize and generate self-related information to an individual. Markus suggested that one's self-schema can affect an individual's performance on cognitive tasks in cross-situational conditions. This developmental perspective on identity is somewhat close to the self-concept that focuses on an inner self with little consideration of social perceptions of the self.

Identity from a socio-cultural perspective. Another approach to describing identity construction comes from a socio-cultural perspective on identity. Mead (1934) claimed that the formation of the self depends on interactions with others, so that it is unpredictable. In his view, the self is a product of social interactions such as feedback from others, taking the attitude of others, and adjusting one's self to social expectations. Mead added that significant symbols such as gestures and language enable social exchanges among individuals, stimulating thought and consciousness. Merton (1957) mentioned that assigning a person to a social position occurs when the individual is assumed to possess certain characteristics that he or she may not yet possess. As others treat the person as though he or she possesses these characteristics, this treatment causes

the person to exhibit the very characteristics he or she was assumed to possess in the first place. From the 1970's onward, identity scholars began to see identity as both the product of individual cognitive processes and also influenced from socio-cultural surroundings (Holland et al., 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Further, Gee (2001) introduced the situation-specific aspect of identity that included the concept of multiplicity of identities. In other words, there are multiple dimensions of identity, and these are projected differently in different situations.

Moje (2004) described the concept of identity as enactments of individuals in specific situations influenced by cultural, racial, social class, and gender differences. This perspective is aligned with the later work of Moje and Luke (2009) who explained identity as dynamic that can be produced, generated, developed, or expressed differently in different situations. Moje and Luke also introduced the idea of identity conflict and negotiation with one's subjectivity when an individual's core identity does not match the current situation. In addition, Woodruff and Schallert (2008) investigated this characteristic of identity, showing that when students built a new identity in a new role or position, their new and old identities may conflict, and individuals may experience some strong emotional difficulties. This may occur because a person's beliefs or identities are not perfectly matched at the beginning with the new task and activities that the person must undertake, and this mismatch may affect the individual's motivation for new social roles and responsibilities. In addition, identity develops from the perceptions and recognition by others built from an individual's own perceptions of others' expectations that affect his/her own cognitions and behaviors (Gee, 2001).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) explained identity as constructed within the self, and claimed that it may significantly differ by culture. In addition, they pointed to the element of the peripheral or public self-identity shaped by relationships with others in different social situations and by encounters with cultural differences. Further, different kinds of relationships between the self and others in specific cultural domains make for differences in identity between individuals. They added that individuals in different cultures have different construal that influence and are influenced by their experiences, cognitions, emotions, and motivations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Another social-cultural perspective on identity comes from a micro-sociological view that links individuals' attitudes to role relationships and behaviors (Desrochers, Andreassi, & Thompson, 2004). According to this view, *identity* can be defined as one's answers to the question "Who am I?" and the answers are related to an individual's different roles such as being a parent and occupational positions at work (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Desrochers et al. claimed that different roles affect identity formation and behaviors. In addition, the concept of identity salience is important because individuals balance between and prioritize different roles. Stryker (1968) mentioned that various identities are contained in a hierarchy of salience, and when two different roles conflict, individuals may experience negative emotions such as frustration and confusion.

Social identity. Another line of identity research falls in what has been called *social identity*, identities that relate to aspects of ethnic, religious, and gender identities as well as, more recently, distinct social groups (Gee, 2001; Moje & Luke, 2009). From the developmental perspective on identity, individuals can acquire social identities in two

ways. First, in general, individuals gain race and gender identities from birth. Second, individuals can develop social identities by joining affinity groups such as religious groups and soccer teams (Gee, 2001). According to Tajefel and Turner (1993), individuals tend to join groups with whom they share interest in certain topics and create their social identity by participating in these social groups. In addition, Cross (1971), Atkinson (1993), Helm (1990), and Phinney (1993) specifically focused on studying ethnic identity development. Cross (1971) introduced the idea of stages in racial identity development for African-Americans involving pre-encounter, encounter, immersion/emersion, internalization, and commitment. Atkinson (1993) expanded Cross' model to explain not only African-Americans' ethnic identity development but also Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Native-Americans.

By contrast, a more social view of social identity would claim that individuals' social identities such as their ethnic, religious, and gender identities are constructed in response to social messages and social pressures (Bandura, 1983). Bandura claimed that social identity produces certain levels of agency and power that contribute to an individual's identity. In the socio-cultural view of social identity, if an environment requests certain behaviors and attitudes from individuals, individuals are confronted with such appeals and may follow without resistance in the beginning, or they may resist to different degrees.

Thus, one's ethnic identity, for example, may be related to the natural, affinity, or institution identities that Gee (2001) described, and to identity as difference by Moje and Luke (2009), and it is influenced by the messages about the ethnic group that one

perceives. As another example, graduate school can be a place where students build a social identity while formulating their professional identity (Ducheney et al., 2001). Social identities, such as ethnic, religious, national, and gender identities, as well as group affiliations are an important part of one's identities. Finally, individuals' different social identities are said to be mutually intertwined and influence each other (Gee, 2001), and may influence the development of professional identity, thereby producing hybrid identities (Moje & Luke, 2009).

Future possible selves. Another perspective on identity comes from the construct of future possible selves. Markus and Nurius (1986) defined *possible selves* as the representations of individuals' perceptions about what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming. Dunkel (2000) extended these ideas, stating that possible selves emerge out of past social experiences, and individuals created a link from the present to the future selves. In addition, he added that possible selves provide long-term motivation and supply direction for the achievement of the desired goal. He provided an example of a graduate student who conjured up the possible self of being a college professor, so that he/she may preserve motivation to endure the graduate program.

Wurf and Markus (1991) claimed that possible selves impact individuals' personal growth as identity development. They argued that the production of possible selves is a mechanism associated with the identity exploration process. Penland, Masten, Zelhart, Fournet, and Callahan (2000) introduced the idea that the feared possible self may hinder academic motivation. Dunkel (2000) also addressed that exposure to new

environments and ideas may provide potential career paths that lead to the generation of possible selves. In addition, Lee and Schallert (2016) investigated how pre-service teachers' imagined possible selves influenced their current participation and motivation in experiences related to their teacher preparation, taking on the ways of the discipline of teaching.

These ideas of future possible selves as integral to identity construction can be linked to the construct of the imagined future community that several researchers, including Norton (2001), Schallert et al. (2016), and Wenger (1998), have investigated. Norton (2001), a theorist and researcher in the area of second language learning, argued that individuals' imagined community creates imagined identities that can influence students' academic engagement and performance. Kanno and Norton (2003) posited that one's imagined community enhances language learning and identity development. Second language students' affiliation with imagined communities, as resulting from joint activities with native speakers, may affect their motivation to practice and may lead to new identity consolidation. They added that an imagined community provides a powerful vision and sense of direction as well as educational goals. However, an imagined community should not be a fantasy or withdrawal from reality but part of current identities, affecting the change or negotiation of current identities. Norton and Toohey (2002) introduced an important relationship between language learning and identity. They mentioned:

> When a language learner writes a poem, a letter, or an academic essay, he/she considers not only the demands of the task but how much of her history will be

> considered relevant to this literacy act. Language learning engages the identities of learners because language itself is not only a linguistic system of signs and symbols; it is also a complex social practice in which the value and meaning ascribed to an utterance are determined in part by the value and meaning ascribed to the person who speaks. (p. 115)

Norton and Toohey (2011) went on to investigate how identity influences the process of second language acquisition by bringing in the construct of investment in imagined communities and identities. The idea of imagined communities and identities represents how individuals' hopes for joining a target language community in the future are reflected in learners' current identities. In other words, the target language community that individuals desire to join is historically constituted but it offers possibilities for a range of identity options in the future. As a result, the imagination of belonging to a future community can provide imagined identities that can encourage motivation for certain discourse practices or behaviors.

Similarly, the idea of a future community became the central phenomenon that Schallert et al. (2016) posited as a result of analyzing the experiences and discourse of students in a graduate class. In their view, a graduate course represents a place in which graduate students envision a future possible professional disciplinary community, negotiating and shifting their identities as different topics emerge in the classroom discussion. These researchers claimed that participating in a learning community is the key to students' learning and to what makes for development or growth in a particular discipline. In other words, graduate students' professional identity development is

reciprocally influenced by their imagined possible self and by the current experiences they undergo within the context of a learning community, especially their discourse experiences. In this view, the future possible self, identity, and disciplinary discourse activities have a reciprocal relationship with each other.

These ideas parallel Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of identity construction as associated with disciplinary communities of practice. In his view of learning as a process of joining a particular community of practice, Wenger emphasized that identity processes become increasingly involved, with individuals developing a new identity as they acquire the core disciplinary skills of the community. He explained that identity development occurs through three modes of belonging to a community, engagement, imagination, and alignment. *Engagement* is direct involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning. *Imagination* is the process by which images of the world are created and connections through time and space are made by extrapolating from one's own experience. It refers to an ability to connect current experiences and the future to more global ideas that are not directly connected to local engagement. *Alignment* refers to the coordination of current energy to fit broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises of the community. This notion denotes how individuals incorporate and negotiate the past and the future in the present. In Wenger's view, identity development processes are affected by past experiences, the present, and an imagined future as well as by the construction of the connections among these dimensions.

Identity from a discourse perspective. Several researchers have argued for the importance of a consideration of discourse practices as critical to identity development

(Baxter, 2004; Gee, 2001; Moje & Luke, 2009; Moss, Gibson & Dollarhide, 2014; Schallert et al., 2016). Reflecting on Bakhtin's (1953) conception of dialogue as a manifestation of individual dispositions, goals, and social locations, Baxter (2004) proposed that communication is a discourse practice that functions to express the self's beliefs and attitudes to others so that the self is understood and influenced by others' actions and beliefs as well. She quoted Bakhtin as saying,

> I achieve self-consciousness; I become myself only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another's help... Cutting myself off, isolating oneself, closing oneself off, those are the basic reasons for loss of self. (p. 96)

In Baxter's perspective, dialogue is foundational to identity construction as well as to sustaining an individual's identity. In other words, individuals are motivated to expand their boundaries through discourse interactions with others so that they acquire different perspectives, resources, and identities. Recognizing differences in the other increases the potential of individuals, and individuals can develop and maintain their identities by continuing this process (Baxter, 2004).

In their essay on the five different perspectives on identity, Moje and Luke (2009) posited that one way to portray identity is as social practices in which individuals construct their identity through the discourses in which they are engaged. In this view, what texts one reads, writes, and talks about can have a critical effect on what identities one develops. In addition, particular kinds of literacy practices that relate to identity can be significantly important in an individual's life. However, because interpretations of texts can vary, the same text can influence individuals differently. They added that this

perspective views identity as stories that individuals have created for themselves through social interactions. In other words, identities are stories (narratives, or histories of the past) individuals tell themselves about themselves. Lastly, in this perspective, identity is not a single stabilized entity that individuals will acquire at one point of life; instead, one might enact different identities throughout different stages of life. This multiplicity of identities can be fluctuating from morning to afternoon or even moment-to-moment (Mishler, 2004).

Street (2009) claimed that three characteristics of academic writing relate to identity formation. First, academic writing involves the articulation of a particular position that is both meaningful to the writer and recognizable by readers. Second, the ability to take, communicate, and defend a stance contributes to identity as built from differentiation from others, as addressed by Moje and Luke (2009). Lastly, text represents an author's devices to help others make their own way to meaning. In other words, writers convey themselves into texts to express their values, credibility, and relationship to ideas in order to influence others. This writing process shapes authors' identities, and the produced text influences readers' identity formation. When applied to graduate students' reading and writing of published papers, proposals, or conference papers, this experience can be seen as one of ultimate identity construction as researchers.

Identity construction as a learning process. In this section, I discuss how learning as an enculturation process is related to the identity development process will be discussed. One of the most relevant model that connects learning to identity processes was proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and later Wenger (1998) who posited the idea

of the individual as learning by participating in the social world. In this view, the learner takes on and is given the identity of a *legitimate peripheral participant* who is joining a community of practice. Communities of practice can be informal and pervasive, and act to enhance individuals' learning experiences through a process that directly influences their identity. Wenger (1998) elaborated on the idea of a relationship between community of practice and of learning and identity with four components: meaning, practice, community, and identity. He proposed that learning and development should be seen as an integral part of participating in a community of practice, and he claimed that these processes cannot be separated from practice, community, and meaning. Identity formation thus becomes a process based in the mutual constitution of the community and individuals. He proposed five characteristics of identities as being negotiated through experience, established in the membership of the community, connected to a learning trajectory, as reconciling memberships in different communities, and as reflecting a relationship with larger global thought communities.

Ligorio (2010) suggested the general framework of socio-cultural constructivism in order to explain the relationship between identity and learning. He mentioned that socio-cultural constructivism recognizes identity as being closely dependent on context and as the outcome of a knowledge building process. In addition, Jorgenen and Keller (2008) claimed that learning involves human resource development and a process of negotiating meaning. Negotiation of meaning refers to the instrumental adaptation between individuals and culture that surpasses time and space. Further, when individuals are negotiating meaning, they also negotiate their identities. Jorgenen and Keller added

that identity formation implies a trajectory that connects individuals' past, present, and future. They extended the idea of community of practice and identity to the possibilities and development potential at the individual level as well as organizational level. This perspective is based on identity formation as a process of the mutual constitution of community and individuals.

Moje and Lewis (2007) explained learning as situated participation not only within current groups but also in ideational discourse communities that surpass time and space, and share various ways and forms of knowledge. According to the view of identity development as an learning process, identity can be shaped by the discourse community in which the individual is participating, not only through face-to-face interactions but also through written discourse. These perspectives provide a view of learning as an enculturation process that links to identity formation.

In this section, I have presented how the literature has conceptualized different perspectives and theoretical frameworks on identity, such as identity as individual construction and identity as a process of change through social and discoursal interactions (Baxter, 2004; Gee, 1996; Moje & Luke, 2009). Identity, and its formation, is both an individual constructive process as sense of self, mind, consciousness, as well as formed from the influence of an outside world as individual difference, position, institution, discourse, narrative, and affinity. Furthermore, identity processes contribute to individual life satisfaction, motivation, cognitive learning process, learning, and even job performance (Moje & Lewis, 2007, Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

Professional Identity

Professional identity can be defined as an individual's self-concept based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, specialized experiences, skills, and education associated with his/her work or professional career (Ibarra, 1999). Brott and Myers (1999) addressed that professional identity is the result of a developmental process that leads individuals to understand, practice, and participate in their profession. In conjunction with one's own self-concept, a professional identity allows a person to articulate a discipline-specific philosophy and to associate appropriately with others within or outside the discipline.

Research supports the claim that formation of a professional identity can be enhanced in two major ways. First, professional identity can be developed through a socialization process (Hall, 1987). For example, when individuals participate in meetings or conferences that relate to their professional field, they acquire related information that influence their own identity. Second, professional identity can be enhanced by discipline-related experiences. Schein (1978) suggested that individuals' priorities and self-understanding are influenced by their work and personal experiences. These experiences give power of agency, that is, they help individuals change their circumstances in the social structure formed by others. Both agency and structure contribute to one's construction of identities (Layder, 1994). Because of the multiplicity and fluidity of identity, professional training contributes to identity development.

In the next sections, the relationship between professional identity and human agency and the view of professional identity from a disciplinary perspective are discussed. As part of the latter topic, I bring in a specific example of professional identity

development, that of counseling psychology graduate education. The latter has received a substantial amount of interest in the literature.

Professional identity and agency. Several researchers claimed that human agency may be an essential element of identity development. In Wenger's (1998) view, the essence of identity is agency. The concept of human agency originates in the work of Marx (1845) who referred to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choice, whereas *structure* refers to those factors (such as social class, but also religion, gender, ethnicity, and subculture) that seem to limit or constrain the opportunities that individuals have.

In addition, Bandura (1987) introduced four properties of human agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. *Intentionality of human agency* means individuals pursue actions based on their own interest, and they create action plans. Bandura claimed that human agency is different from free will because agency refers to the autonomy to make constructive contributions to the structures created by other agents. He added that *forethought of human agency* refers to how individuals visualize future goals and anticipate outcomes. *Self-reactiveness* refers to how individuals react to circumstances and environments. Lastly, *self-reflectiveness* refers to how individuals have their own metacognitive system with which to evaluate what they are doing.

These concepts are founded in social cognitive theory, which is also the basis for the construct of efficacy beliefs posited by Bandura (1987). In his view, there are three modes of human agency: personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. *Personal*

agency is the capacity of individuals to make decisions independently and to contribute to the social structure to which they belong such as organizations, religion, and ethnicity. *Proxy agency* refers to situations when individuals do not possess the power to make impact on the structure, and yet, they would like to convey their voice through those who do have power. Lastly, *collective agency* is agency coming from a group of individuals. According to Atewologun and Singh (2010), professional identity has a higher salient rank than other identities such as gender and ethnic identities because professional identity contains the agency with associated power to protect the self. In other words, when individuals negotiate to choose to reflect an identity among several different identities (e.g., gender, race, and professional identity) in a certain situation, their professional identity is likely to rise to the forefront because it takes on a stronger position through identity negotiation.

Professional identity from a disciplinary perspective. Professional identity development can be seen as the process of disciplinary enculturation by specific disciplinary practices (Cross & Strauss, 2003; Moje, 2004b; Wenger, 1998). In this section, I describe work on professional identity development as a disciplinary practice and the enculturation process into specific professional fields.

Wenger (1998) posited that identity formation is significantly influenced by disciplinary practices. He claimed that when individuals are joining a community of practice, as they try to acquire the core disciplinary skills, they develop a new identity. He added that in order for this process to happen, individuals must gain permission to participate in the community of practice. This is called legitimate peripheral participation.

Once individuals enter a community of practice, their disciplinary enculturation begins and is speeded up when compared to remaining on the outside of the community's boundaries. Professional identity development occurs as a process of legitimate peripheral participation, contributing to individuals' core identity and adding a professional identity to other identities that the individual has acquired such as gender, ethnicity, and religious identities.

For example, there is a line of research on professional identity development in the area of counseling psychology. Investigating professional identity development is especially important in the field of counseling psychology or any other healthcare field because individuals possibly will make critical decisions for their clients/patients, and their decisions about clients/patients are influenced by their professional identity (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010).

In the field of counseling psychology, professional identity development is defined as the progressive commitment to the counseling profession and the solidifying of individuals' identity with the profession (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014). The process of professional identity development is grounded in the successful integration of personal attributes, including values and beliefs, and professional training in the context of a professional community. In addition, several researchers in the field approach professional identity development as the integration of the professional self and personal self (Healey et al., 2010, Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Several factors that may influence professional counselor identity development have been introduced. First, individuals must establish a clear foundation and construct a professional philosophy as counselors that clarifies and distinguishes the counseling profession from other vocations (Healey & Hays, 2012). Moss et al. (2014) identified client experiences as significant to the progression in counselors' professional identity development across the career lifespan. In addition, these researchers reported that external validation of counselors' professional identity come from experienced guides and from clients. As counselors received external validation from an experienced guide or a client and gained additional knowledge, they were able to enhance their professional identity. For the novice counselor, learning new techniques, taking classes, or making a change in one's counseling approach were also significant contribution to developing professional identity. As counselors progress in their career, experiences of success or failure will be another factor to build their professional identity along with positive feedback (Ronnestad & Skovhlot, 2003).

Moss et al. (2014) reported that belonging to the professional community includes joining professional organizations, licensing boards, and credentialing bodies, and accrediting agencies enhance counselors' professional identity. They stressed that participating in professional organizations provides learning experiences about the culture of the counseling profession to counselors that advance their professional identity.

Coll, Doumans, Trotter, and Freeman (2013) mentioned that for beginning counselors, specific counseling classes during their graduate school influenced the progress of professional identity development. Gibson et al. (2010) explained that new

counselors relied on external references such as textbooks and other colleagues for understanding their own professional identity as counselors, whereas advanced counselors incorporated more personal attributes into their professional identity.

In addition, the emphasis on the relationship between self-efficacy and professional identity development is also found in several studies (Healey et al., 2010, Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Healey and Hays (2012) reported that self-efficacy was highly associated with individuals' own perceptions as counselors and engagement in the counseling profession. In other words, as I addressed earlier in the sections on agency power and professional identity, individuals' professional discipline-specific competency and level of engagement with the profession is associated with their professional identity (Bandura, 1987).

Next, Moss et al. (2014) investigated on counseling psychologist that they explained professional identity development as a lifelong developmental process. They claimed that as counselors gain awareness of this process, they can be more effective and experience greater job satisfaction (Moss et al., 2014). Whereas, novice counselors who have not developed their professional identity may think of counseling as something separate from other aspects of their lives. Moss et al. found that novice counselors wanted to keep their professional and personal lives separate in order to have balance whereas expert counselors merged their professional and personal selves to create a congruent self in which life experiences and professional experiences were both balanced and valued.

Further, Healey and Hays (2012) claimed that expert counselors were aware of their limitations and experienced freedom in knowing their limitations. In other words, as

professional counselors move along in their career, their professional identity and commitment to the profession move from an external to an internal locus of evaluation, and from a reliance on experts to reliance on their own experience and training, including their professional development over a lifetime Even if these studies are not rooted in the foundational identity construct, many aspects are aligned with the framework of identity development. Literatures on professional identity development in the field of counseling psychology contributed to my understanding of professional identity development.

Professional Identity Development in Graduate Programs

In this section, I introduce graduate programs as a place where individuals acquire or develop professional identity. It is worth noting that most accredited graduate programs in America have special characteristics that constrain an investigation of professional identity development due to the diverse multidisciplinary environments, the significance of social influences, and the requirement of certain skill sets before students may graduate and work in the field (Ducheny, Alletzhäusser, Crandell, & Schneider, 1997). For these reasons, some professional identity development researchers have given attention to this participant group. I introduce the nature of graduate school and student's professional identity development, then a significance of discourse practices in graduate school.

Graduate school as site for professional identity development. Ducheny and colleagues (1997) suggested that graduate student professional identity development typically includes three primary elements: (a) the importance of continuing training and familiarity with relevant research, which is the most commonly mentioned component of

professional development, (b) the influence of a supportive peer group or mentor, and (c) the organization of professional development into stages articulated by formative events and level of training. For example, most doctoral students go through a qualifying process, a dissertation stage, and a job searching process. These stages can be explained as a progression of professional development through a series of stages that contain significant task completion requirements or critical, identity-relevant events. In addition, individuals' beliefs, values, areas of interest, and their professional and personal needs are essential components of professional development as graduate students (Miller, 1992).

Gazzola, Stefano, Audet, and Theriault (2011) investigated what experiences and conditions do counseling psychology doctoral students perceive as contributing to their professional identities. The results showed that experiencing negative views of the profession, disappointment with institutional training, and internal conflicts such as worry about completing their graduate program hindered students' identity development. By contrast, positive experiences with clients during clinical training and achievements in the program crystallized their views of their professional selves. The results also showed that institutional training was the most significant element in cultivating their professional identities. Interestingly, participants had moments when they needed to adjust and balance between their personal and professional lives, and usually the new professional self and profession became a confident priority (Moss et al., 2014). In addition, their values and beliefs were mostly consistent with those traditionally adopted by the field of psychology. Such congruence may simply be the result of students choosing to join a program with careful consideration of whether they match well with institutional

philosophy. Over time, their growing expertise signaled a shift from the role of student to someone with professional knowledge and expertise.

Similarly, Pratt, Rockmann, and Kaufmann (2006) studied the role of work and professional identity development among medical residents. They reported that professional identity construction happened when the residents were acquiring work competence with different patterns of identification constructed by their specific medical professions. The study emphasized the importance of the relationship between "doing" and "being" among professionals. In other words, when residents faced a conflict between their work and professional identities, they rectified this violation by customizing who they were to match what they did. Furthermore, Kaplan and Flum (2012) claimed that academic learning cannot be divorced from students' development of their values, goals, social roles, and worldviews, when mode of knowledge construction and accessibility to different types of knowledge are rapidly increasing and diversifying. These authors synthesized previous work on professional identity and what affects its development process.

Kaplan and Flum (2012) also highlighted how graduate students build their social roles, positions, and identities in the process of their professional training. They addressed the research question of whether a person adopting a new role in new situation experiences constraints on his or her behavior by the expectations associated with the role of becoming a graduate student. Students' cognitive ability such as their decision-making showed evidence of being influenced by these expectations and the role enactments they elicited. Additionally, Dean and Jolly (2009) studied graduate students' identity

construction and disengagement in learning situations. The study demonstrated that students sometimes rejected learning opportunities, experiencing disengagement from learning activities that challenged their identity. In other words, some learning activities can trigger elements of students' identities, forcing a cognitive dissonance confrontation. Dean and Jolly (2012) argued that students' identity engagement will increase the benefits they gain from learning experiences.

The role of discourse practices in graduate studies. Several studies have highlighted the significance of discourse practices in graduate school. Noll and Fox (2003) explained that fluency in the discourse practices of one's discipline such as writing, reading, and communicating with colleagues is one of the main professional skills that graduate students should learn, along with research design skills, while they are in a graduate program. They explained that because most graduate programs are designed to train researchers who can conduct sophisticated research in the field within a few years, students undergo professional disciplinary training by participating in research teams or in professional conferences. Because students have to write about their studies, whether it is for their dissertation or submission for journal articles, this process often happens with faculty advisors (Noll & Fox, 2003).

In addition, Burgess and Ivanic (2010) claimed that, in a few years of training, students must be able to acquire abilities to produce quality papers within their professional area. Over this period, students develop a professional identity, and this identity is constructed and changed through these discourse practices Especially, they highlighted writing as an act of identity construction because when individuals write a

particular type of text, they must use particular media, materials, resources, and particular discourse and generic features, in particular ways. In addition, these authors suggested the importance of the relationship between timing and discourses, and identity development in timescales. In other words, identity continuously changes over time so that timing is central to processes of meaning making in certain situations. They presented an important aspect of writer identity development in the consideration of timescales, addressing the question of how identity is developed through acts of writing and reading and is consolidated over time. Thus, a person's multifaceted identity is constructed through interactions with others and his/her socio-cultural context, so that the resulting identity comes to be reflected in the writing and in the ways in which the writer is able to convey a certain persona to readers.

In a study of established physicists, Bazerman (1985) claimed that the process of engaging with the discourse practices of a field encourages members to conceptualize knowledge and procedural knowledge, and to develop a professional identity in certain ways. In addition, as it bridges the conceptual gap between knowing and doing, writing acts as a way to solidify a person's domain knowledge and professional identity in the discipline. Furthermore, he explained how individual purposes and prior knowledge affect the writing, thinking, and reading in the discipline. For the physicists in his study, professional purposes that represented their individual values and beliefs influenced their construction of meaning significantly. Further, their prior experiences affected their comprehension and current decision-making as well. This study provided a new view of how professional identity can affect or be affected by specific disciplinary practices such

as writing and reading. As well, previous experiences and domain specific knowledge can play an important role in forming or developing professional identity even as they affect individual purposes and decision-making. Thus, disciplinary enculturation involves a change process, and this process can be explained as a learning process.

In addition, Carter (2007) explained writing as a tool to express insights about how different disciplines interpret evidence and may be related to graduate students' emerging identity as a researcher. He suggested that writing in one's discipline is different from writing out of discipline, and is affected by disciplinary practices through apprenticeship in the discipline's discourses. The distinction between inside and outside of a discipline reflects the difference in prior knowledge, which is an important source of identity. In addition, Noll and Fox (2003) explained writing as one of the key professional practices that graduate students must develop while in their program. They explained that beginning graduate students participate with faculty members or advanced graduate students on studies so that they can experience the nature of research and become co-authors. In this case, individuals express their collective values and ideas on the topic in their writings, and it becomes a significant contributor to identity construction in their graduate student life. For example, they learn to write project proposals, lab reports, grants, and various assignments in the form of written language. In order to write these various written products, graduate students must experience some decision making such as how to identify, define, and analyze issues, determine what information is appropriate to solving a problem, and then find the information, assess its authority and validity, and learn how to use it effectively. Thus, writing as a core disciplinary skill that

graduate students acquire seems highly associated with individuals' identity development process. In sum, several studies addressed the significance of discourse practices as a significant factor for graduate students' professional identity development as well as their knowledge acquisition and disciplinary skills development.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

There is a significant amount of work that has been done on the construct of identity, professional identity, and its formation in different fields in the past decades. In addition, there have been some efforts to understand professional identity formation from the perspective of professional enculturation and domain-specific practices. Further, some researchers have worried about graduate studies in terms of impact on identity development. However, most studies of professional identity development have not approached it from a fundamental understanding of the construct of professional identity construction, especially highlighting specific socio-cultural influences and disciplinary skills development. In sum, this study was designed to contribute to the work on identity more broadly and at a theoretical level, on professional identity development, and on the graduate experience as a professional development site. My questions addressed how graduate students constructed their professional identity during their graduate studies and what were the various influences affecting educational psychology graduate students' new or fused professional identity.

Chapter 3

METHOD

In this chapter, I discuss aspects of data collection and data analysis that inform my research questions. I began gathering data in Fall 2013 and completed data collection in the summer of 2016 when data saturation seemed to be reached, at which point new data no longer informed the development of codes and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I analyzed data as they were collected to respect the nature of grounded theory, with its requirements for concurrent data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I present a methodological overview, a description of the setting, participants, and data collection procedures including interview protocols and observation strategies. I then address details of data analysis, researcher subjectivity, and trustworthiness issues. I end this chapter with a conclusion.

Methodological Overview

To identify the way that graduate students' professional identity develops, I chose grounded theory qualitative approach because I was concerned primarily with process and a socio-cultural perspective on identity development, which conceptualizes identity as a product of interaction between individuals and their socio-cultural surrounding. This grounded theory qualitative approach consists of several methodological elements that I saw as appropriate to answering my research questions, including constant comparison data collection and analysis, theoretical sampling, and emphasis on inductive and deductive reasoning to identify a central phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1986). Because my underlying assumption about the construct of identity is that it is multiple and fluid

from moment-to-moment, I conducted immediate and ongoing analysis of data, even as other data were still being collected. In this way, identity changes in different situations could be reflected throughout data collection. Finally, as Strauss and Corbin (2001) suggested, grounded theory is appropriate for building a theory based on relationships among many factors that influence a central phenomenon. In correspondence with a study of the process of professional identity development, I expected that development components, related actions, and social interactions would be shaped around a central phenomenon related to professional identity.

As a qualitative researcher, I was conscious of my own position as a graduate student. In a qualitative approach, the positionality of the researcher is an important consideration (Creswell & Brown, 1992), and two different approaches to grounded theory have evolved in terms of a researcher's position toward participants: the systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2005, 2006). The systematic approach is the more traditional approach, and it aims to develop a theory that explains process, actions, or interactions around an emerging central phenomenon. For this approach, a researcher is most often an outsider to the participants in order to collect accurate data, and interpret and develop a model with little contamination from researcher bias (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Although the systematic approach is most common, a newer approach has been explicated, the constructivist approach. Charmaz (2006) explained that constructivist researchers should have a good understanding of the lives of their participants and should develop a close relationship with individuals in order to analyze the data appropriately. In this study,

because I myself am/was going through similar professional identity development processes as my participants and was able to participate in formal and informal social gatherings even as I collected observational data, I was able to capture and interpret data in the ways described by the constructivist approach. In this way, I had a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences in order to detect and interpret subtle, embedded, or hidden situations of participants. Finally, my position as a student helped me to develop a conceptual understanding of their professional identity development that is influenced by participants' values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies.

Setting Description

In this study, of the four programs available to students in the Educational Psychology department, I chose to focus on three programs: counseling psychology and school psychology as examples of professional psychology practice-oriented programs, and human development as an academically focused program, to compare and contrast the process of professional identity development across different content areas. According to the Educational Psychology program website, the human development program emphasizes training in becoming a researcher. The counseling psychology and school psychology programs are designed to train students to be practitioners in the field and researchers pursuing inquiry questions. Thus, counseling psychology and school psychology graduate students need to develop dual professional skills (as researcher and practitioner), and as a result they may experience conflicts that human development program students do not.

Professional Practice-oriented Programs

As explained above, the c*ounseling psychology,* and the *school psychology* programs have twin goals for their students, which explains their use of the term "scientist-practitioner" in describing their graduates. First, students are prepared to become researchers who apply research to practice and contribute to psychological and educational knowledge through research. Second, students are trained to work as practicing psychologists serving the educational, health, and psychological needs of children, adolescents, and families, and work in schools, school-related, or hospital settings. Both aspects of their training help students apply relevant legal and ethical principles, cultural sensitivity, and self-awareness to their research, their teaching, and their professional practice. Because these students have to build two different professional skill sets, there is the potential that they experience more struggles than other students who are in non-practitioner programs when deciding on a future path. However, most students arrive to the programs with some sort of relevant experience in related venues, and they often emphasize practice more than research.

Both programs are APA-accredited, with the American Psychological Association dictating many of the details of the students' training. The website for the counseling psychology program introduces as a program goal "to enhance the student's professional development through identification with Counseling Psychology as a professional specialty and incorporation of APA ethical principles and standards for practice." Interestingly, the website explicitly addresses professional development through identity.

There are several milestones for professional program students. First, students are required to take core classes before they can begin work in practicum placements. They

are required also to fulfill a specialized competency requirement, several semesters of practicum, and participation in supervision seminar. In addition, students in both counseling and school psychology must successfully complete the qualifying process. The two professional programs differ in how the qualifying process proceeds, with counseling psychology students needing to submit a document and receive a passing score on written and oral exams, and school psychology students needing to submit a document and receive a passing score only on an oral exam. Students in both programs must successfully present a dissertation proposal in order to be allowed to apply for the one-year-long internship, most often requiring re-location, that is the final capstone of each program. The dissertation may be completed (data collection, data analysis, writing a document, presenting it to the committee, and successfully completing a final defense oral exam) before, during, or after the internship is completed.

Academic Program

The human development program aims "to stimulate discussion, inquiry, and curiosity among faculty and students concerning a myriad of questions regarding psychology as applied to education at all levels" (program website). The program's primary goal is to develop an ability to design research and produce quality scholarly publications, while understanding theory and scholarship that will allow them to contribute to the field of learning, human development and culture broadly conceived. Knowledge, skills, and abilities for working with human diversity are emphasized at all levels of training.

Graduates of the area contribute to the field of educational psychology primarily through teaching and research. The contexts in which they work include educational institutions (primarily colleges and universities), K-12 school support agencies, educational research laboratories, and human service delivery organizations. Milestones of the program include completion of coursework, a pre-doctoral research project, and successful completion of the qualifying process, which involves submitting a written document and passing written and oral exams. Finally, students develop a dissertation proposal, present it to their committee at a proposal defense oral, submit their dissertation document to their committee, and must successfully pass the final dissertation oral.

Participants

Recruitment of Participants

I recruited participants by personal invitation and by referral from previous participants. All those invited were educational psychology graduate students studying either in a professional psychology program (counseling psychology or school psychology), or in an academic program (human development program). I purposefully selected participants who were at different stages of their programs. The first group consisted of new graduate students, who were in the beginning stages of the program. The second group included students who were preparing or had gone through their qualifying exams (typically in the second or third year). The final group consisted of students in the dissertation process.

Participants

Participants were from two major groups: the academic program and the professional practice-oriented programs. The total number of participants was 34. Of these, 19 became focal participants, nine from the professional program and ten from the academic program, whom I followed across milestones over at least two semesters of their program in order to observe changes in their professional identity. The other participants, eight informants from the professional program and seven from the academic program, were interviewed only once but contributed to informing my emerging understanding and helping me develop a more comprehensive picture. Note that some informants began as focal participants, but due to attrition, they were no longer available for second or third interviews in this study. However, their initial data were still valuable to inform this project.

In addition, all participants represented three sub-groups in each program. The first group consisted of beginners, students in their first three semesters who had not yet begun officially the qualifying exam process. The second group included participants who were interviewed during or just after completion of the year-long qualifying exam process. This group was the most difficult to describe precisely in terms of their years in the program and milestones, as the timing of the beginning of the qualifying process could occur in the third, fourth, or fifth semesters, and students who did not pass the first time had one year to do the process again. The third group included participants in the process of preparing the proposal and completing the final draft of the dissertation.

In the professional program, four total participants were in the beginner group, three of whom I interviewed twice and one person who was interviewed only once. The

third group, the advanced group, consisted of seven participants, three of whom were interviewed only once (either as they were planning the proposal or having their proposal meeting), with the rest followed from proposal, to dissertation, and beyond. The second group, made up of six participants, spanned interviews conducted in the second to fifth semesters.

In the academic program, eight total participants were in the beginner group, three of whom I interviewed twice and five people who was interviewed only once. The second group, made up of four participants, spanned interviews conducted in the second to seventh semesters.

The third group, the advanced group, consisted of five participants, one person was interviewed only once and four of them were interviewed twice. Participants' information can be found in the below Table 1, including ethnicity, age at time of initial interview, and gender.

Table 1.

							1 year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year		Note
#	ProF	Phase	Name	G	Age	R	1F	2S	3F	4S	5F	6S	7F	8S+	Interview Points
1	Group 1	Beg	Sandra	f	24	w	1		2						Beginning
2			Gabriella	f	25	w	1		2						Beginning
3			Owen	m	26	w		1		2					Beginning
4			Savannah	f	24	w		1							Beginning
5	Group 2	Int	Autumn	f	25	w			1						Preparing for QP
6			Tamara	f	27	w		1			2				1.Begin- 2.after QP
7			Ivy	f	26	w		1			2				1.Begin- 2.after QP
8			Jelena	f	28	w			1		2				1.Begin- 2.after QP
9			Paula	f	27	w					1				After QP
10			Venus	f	26	w				1					After QP
11	Group 3	Adv	Lindsey	f	26	w						1			Post QP/Pre Prop
12			Candace	f	29	w						1			Post QP/Pre Prop
13			Audrey	f	26	w						1			Proposal
14			Scarlett	f	27	w					1		2		Proposal
15			Bailey	f	30	w					1		2		1.QP- 2.Proposal
16			Adam	m	33	w					1		2		1.QP- 2.Proposal
17			Linda	f	34	w							1	2	1.Proposal- 2.Intern
							1 year		2nd year		3rd year		4th year		
	AcaD			G	Age	R	1F	2S	3F	4S	5F	6S	7F	8S +	Note
1	Group 1	Beg	Becker	m	27	w	1								Quit
2			Brady	m	26	h	1								Quit
3			Alice	f	27	w		1							Beginning
4			Heidi	f	25	a		1							Beginning
5			Serena	f	31	a		1							Beginning
6			Lionel	m	30	w		1		2					1.Begin- 2.Pre QP
7			Ronda	f	27	h		1		2					1.Begin- 2.Pre QP
8			Sydney	f	26	w		1		2					1.Begin- 2.Pre QP
9	Group 2	Int	Ruby	f	27	h			1						Preparing QP
10			Wade	m	32	w			1		2				1.Begin- 2.Pre QP
11			Danny	m	29	w				1		2			1.QP- 2.Proposal

Table 1 (continued)

12			Keira	f	28	a					1		2		1.QP- 2.Proposal
13	Group 3	Adv	Nicole	f	29	w					1				After QP
14			Kelly	f	26	w					1		2		1.QP- 2.Proposal
15			Frederick	m	32	w						1		2	1.QP- 2.Proposal
16			Thomas	m	42	w							1	2	1.Proposal- 2.job
17			Alfred	m	27	a							1	2	1.Proposal- 2.job

Footnote, Beg= Beginning, Int= Intermediate, Adv= Advanced, f=Female, m=Male, w=White, h=Hispanic, a=Asian, 1= First interview, 2=Second interview

Privacy and Confidentiality

Throughout my report, participants are referred to by pseudonym. Participants were informed at the initial interview of their privacy and confidentiality rights as they signed the consent form. I also at that point let them know they were free to quit at any time during the interview, or if they did not want to answer any interview question, they were free not to answer. The audio recordings were labeled by pseudonym, and transcripts immediately incorporated pseudonyms rather than the participants' own names. The audio files were reviewed multiple times, transcribed, and analyzed only by me, and they will be kept for three years. Consent forms are securely stored in my office, separate from transcripts of the audio files, and will be kept for three years.

Procedures

In this study, I followed a general grounded theory procedure to investigate professional identity development of graduate students as they become immersed in their

discipline. In this section, I describe data collection procedures, including interview and observation protocols, and list the data sources.

Data Collection and Data Sources

Initial data collection began Fall 2013, and I continued to collect data until summer 2016 when data saturation was reached. Having examined studies with similar methods (e.g, Do & Schallert, 2004), I identified at least three participants in each group (beginning, qualifying process, and dissertation process) to inform inferences from their distinctive experiences. I then determined the saturation point when new data were not providing any new information. Major data sources were from participants' interviews, supplemented by observation notes from several informal social gatherings and research meetings.

Interviews. When participants agreed to participate in the study, I arranged a first meeting, usually through electronic communication, and often sent them a copy of the consent form so that they might peruse it in advance. When they arrived at the first interview session, I provided the consent form. Participants were told that they should read the form, that it was a consent form that described their rights and responsibilities as participants in the study, and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time simply by telling me. None refused to be interviewed for an initial interview although several participants became unavailable for later interviews. In addition, I told them that they could ask any question or express concerns about the study at this time. Once questions had been answered, the participants were directed to sign the consent form. The signed consent forms were collected immediately.

Official interviews were approximately 30 to 40 minutes. However, I spent enough time with participants before and after interviews to build rapport with them. Thus, the total amount of time with each participant was much longer than the actual duration of interviews. I followed interview techniques suggested by Spradley (1979) who explained that the rapport-building process has four stages: apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation. He addressed that in the apprehension stage, most interviews have an air of uncertainty that may reflect apprehensive feelings such as anxiety, worry, and nervousness for both interviewees and researcher. I noticed that most of my participants seemed a little uncomfortable when they came into the interview room because they anticipated being asked about personally sensitive stories including their academic and personal struggles. In addition, despite telling participants about privacy and confidentiality policies of the study, they seemed afraid that some information could be revealed and that there might be negative consequences for them. Students seemed especially worried about discussing their relationships with their advisors or cohort peers with me, especially students in the human development program, where I am positioned as an insider who went/is going through the same program and associated with the same stakeholders such as faculty members and administration staff. To address their concerns, I reassured the participants that their personal information would not be revealed, and data would not be shared with other individuals. For the professional program students, I emphasized that I was going through a program similar to theirs but at some distance, emphasizing that I am an outsider to the counseling or school psychology program or the individuals involved. In addition, I explained that the purpose of the study was to

understand the professional identity development process, and I assured participants that their names would be replaced with pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. It was my perception that using this approach made participants feel more comfortable sharing their stories.

Once we had overcome these initial worries, most participants cooperated with me very well, and we even established mutual trust. The attention I paid to building rapport helped me tremendously to form stable and comfortable interview sessions so that interviewees were willing to share meaningful information. Finally, when I saw the necessity, I contacted participants after meetings for member checking.

Follow-up interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience after at least one semester after the previous interview. The follow-up interviews were shorter than the initial interview because I had already built rapport with participants so that they knew what to expect and the kinds of questions that I would ask. The questions for the follow-up interviews were derived from the first interview and solicited more specific information about their experiences. After the second interview, occasionally, I contacted participants for member checking. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Interview protocol. In constructing the questions for each interview, I worked conscientiously so as not to prime their specific answers to my questions. However, I tried to guide participants to elaborate on their professional identity and related experiences by using a set of questions that I borrowed from and modified from Gibson et al. (2010). During the initial interview, I began with open-ended, general questions and

then asked more specific retrospective questions reflecting on their lives before joining the graduate program: *How do you introduce yourself to others? Can you tell me about who you are? What were you doing before joining this graduate program?* I then asked about their current life as a graduate student, *Can you tell me about your graduate school life?*

Whenever participants mentioned themselves as a professional or their professional training, I asked questions regarding their self perception of professional identity, their perspectives on their professional identity that related to their current training and related experiences as a graduate student. For example, I asked questions geared towards professional identity: *Can you define what professional identity is in your own words? What does it mean for you to be a professional in the field? What experience so far has contributed to your professional identity and why? What experiences have resonated with you as a professional in the field and why?*

Finally, I asked them about their future plans including short term and long term career plans. For example, I asked such questions as: *What is your short term plan? What is your future plan? How do you envision yourself in your field?*

These questions are provided as part of the interview protocol (see Appendix A).

Observations. As a secondary data source, with permission from my participants, I observed them in formal and informal activities such as content classes, research meetings, social gatherings, and professional conference participation. I took observation notes to confirm and enrich interview data. I asked questions after meetings as member checking of field notes. These data supplemented the coding process. I particularly paid

attention to their conversation topics that revealed their professional identity or professional identity development related activities. For example, I identified such language as: “We are counselors…” “I am a researcher...” “As a researcher…” “As a practitioner…” “As a professional…” “In our professional field…”

In sum, there were several data sources: interviews (either one or two primary interviews), member checking meetings, observation notes, and more minimally, artifacts from the programs’ webpages.

Data Analysis

Charmaz (2001) claimed that in order to capture the appropriate aspects one is investigating, the researcher should be someone who understands the participants well. Such familiarity with the participants and programs helped me to interpret and analyze subtle meanings and signs of the central phenomenon, professional identity development.

I analyzed data by using the constant comparative method, in which descriptive codes and categories are created based on the content of the interviews. From transcribed data, I then applied codes for relevant categories to each unit of information, composed of events, phenomena, and incidents that might be related to a central phenomenon. Next, I compared and contrasted all coded data to identify initial insights to understand the factors contributing to and the progression of professional identity development that would likely be represented in later interview and observation data. I met with a peer debriefer several times who helped me identify codes and themes. I had to go back to the original interview recorded data numerous times to evaluate subtle nuances in participants' use of tone in conveying particular meanings.

I went through the constant comparative method of coding and creating categories involving several forms of coding processes, starting with *open coding* and *axial coding* of interview, observation, and field note data, in which I identified categories and subcategories from the data. Then, I conducted axial coding to identify logical relationships among the properties from open coding, placed outcomes into context, and identified antecedents and consequences. Lastly, selective coding was used to make a link to create a model from categories and subcategories. *Selective coding* involves developing and describing propositions, themes, or hypotheses that connect different categories around a core phenomenon in order to develop a theoretical model (Creswell & Brown, 1992).

In sum, I continuously compared and contrasted between participants in the two different programs (clinical professional and academic) to see the difference and develop categories and a core phenomenon. Axial coding and selective coding were used for detailing categories and describing intersection of the categories. Although I do not present a fully developed model, I provide the foundation for such a model through themes and their interrelationship.

Researcher Subjectivity

The position of the researcher is a crucial issue in qualitative grounded theory. There are two aspects of researcher positionality, one involving a researcher's theoretical position and another referring to the researcher's relationship with the research participants (Dunne, 2011).

First, in terms of my theoretical positionality, I did conduct an extensive review of the literature, such as might have contaminated my view (Charmaz, 2006; Robson, 2002), because it was important to identify explicitly my theoretical position on the issues I believe arose in my research. Therefore, my theoretical position is that I acknowledge that although I appreciate the early work of such giants in the field as Erikson and Marcia, my approach and understanding of identity is more aligned with such socio-cultural researchers as Moje and Lewis (2004), Holland et al., (1998), Wenger (1998), and Schallert et al. (2016).

The second aspect of researcher positionality is the relationship with participants, with its potential influence on the study participants and data analysis as a critical factor in the inductive grounded theory study (Reed & Proctor, 1995). Reed and Procter introduced three positions that a researcher may take as *outsider*, *hybrid*, and *insider*. The outsider position refers to researchers who have no prior professional experience or knowledge in the area and are merely visitors to the area of study whereas a hybrid position is a researcher who has some background knowledge in the research area but not much detailed insight into the practical experiences in the area. Lastly, the insider position refers to the researcher who is a part of a particular group looking into his/her own and known field.

In my study, I placed myself between the hybrid and insider position. The insider position is relevant because I have existing knowledge of participants from studying and working directly in the educational psychology program, and I knew some key milestones and members of the educational psychology graduate programs. However,

even if I had some existing knowledge of participants, as well as have pre-existing knowledge of the area and programs, I did not have much knowledge of the professional programs nor any direct involvement in their practicum-related activities, so I position myself as hybrid related to the professional programs.

As a graduate student, the participants for this study are either my cohort fellow students or other graduate students in the same department. I have been taking classes with some of them, did homework and class projects with them, and often talked with them about faculty members and departmental requirements. Sometimes, I have invited my peers to my place to have dinner. Some of them were my co-workers as assistant instructors, and we had regular group meetings regarding various student issues. For these reasons, I have already heard and know about their perspectives on certain experiences such as their advisors, the program, relationships with other students, and personal struggles and challenges. Thus, I have to acknowledge that my previous information and relationships with potential participants may influence the interview process and color my interpretation of data. This researcher bias could be a factor when investigating the central phenomenon of identity formation.

For these reasons, I know that I need to be very careful about what I hear and what I say to my friends and faculty members because it may unexpectedly affect relationships with them. I should remind myself that they are my friends before they are my participants, and that I am conducting this research to benefit not only my scholarly curiosity about identity development but also to help my fellow graduate students and

faculty members by providing a better understanding of the enculturation process involved in graduate studies.

In sum, I acknowledged my pre-existing knowledge and experiences with participants that may influence my perspectives on data. Additionally, I tried to practice reflexivity to maintain the inductive-deductive requirement inherent to grounded theory methodology. Therefore, in this study, my position relative to my participants allowed me to take both systemic and constructivist approaches to grounded theory. For students in my own program, I was very much aware of the particular issues they brought up when they described the pressures and norms of our program. For these participants, my challenge was to hear their perspectives without imposing my own experience on what they tell me. For students in the professional programs, I was more of an outsider as I needed to understand their practicum and internship application experiences through the more usual methods associated with the systematic approach.

Trustworthiness Issues

For the trustworthiness of this study, I carefully observed the validation strategies provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Specific strategies to respect trustworthiness of the data interpretation are discussed below. As in any qualitative research, there are several features that give validity and reliability to assure the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. Strauss and Corbin provided four areas for evaluating grounded theory research. First, are the data valid, reliable, and credible? Second, are the constructs credible? Third, is the process through which the theory was generated valid? Lastly, are the results, a generated theory, grounded in data?

For this study, the first form of trustworthiness came from member checking with participants. After an initial interview or observation, I checked whether my coding and understanding about the participant's retrospective experiences, comments, and behaviors were in line with his/her own views. Relatedly, a second form of trustworthiness came from having more than one data source to address the research questions. I checked whether the responses from the initial interview and follow-up questions after one or two semesters make sense together. I participated in some social gatherings, research meetings, and classes to collect observational data. These data sources allowed for a thorough triangulation of the core phenomenon. A third source of trustworthiness came from checking and double checking codes and interpretations. For early coding sessions, I reviewed raw data thoroughly to identify a central phenomenon, and some time after the early coding, I began to identify emerging themes. For the second round of data analysis, I coded and re-coded with a peer debriefer to verify if my initial coding and second coding match with themes around the central phenomenon professional identity.

Finally, as I stated in an earlier section, the grounded theory approach was chosen for this project because of the philosophical and methodological fit for research on professional identity development. The significant characteristic of using grounded theory methods is their potential for generating new theory. As Corbin and Strauss (1990) described, this process involved simultaneous data collection and analysis, using open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify categories, concepts, themes, and the relationships among them. Credibility of the resulting theory was supported through procedural rigor, field notes, memos, and member checking process.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

This chapter has outlined the research design and methodology I used to answer the research questions regarding professional identity development in educational psychology graduate programs. The methodological framework, setting, participants, data collection, data analysis, researcher positionality, and trustworthiness issues were detailed. Chapter four will discuss the results from the grounded theory study.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The primary aim of this study was to investigate educational psychology doctoral students' development of professional identity at various points during their graduate programs. To preview my overall findings, data showed the progression and factors that associate with educational psychology graduate students' professional identity development. Interestingly, among several different factors that influenced their professional identity development, their possible future self in a community of practice appeared as a distinctive influence. Further, graduate students' background experiences and abilities made difference in their development of professional identity and also allowed them to envision possible future professional self and enhance their professional identity. In addition, note that there were difference between professional program students and academic program students on their professional identity development due to different requirements of each program and career trajectories. As themes are described, quotes are provided to support each theme and all participants' names are pseudonym to protect their privacy.

Definition of Professional Identity

Before introducing the three themes that related to professional identity development, I begin by providing a synthesis of my participants' own definitions of what *professional* means. As addressed in the literature review, *professional identity* can be understood in many different ways by different disciplinary fields and scholars. Interestingly, several participants were explicit about separating the concept of "being

professional" and "being a professional in their discipline." They highlighted that there are several professional attributes such as dependable, trustworthy, hard-working, and skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, self-regulation, and communication that described as being professional and that these differ from the distinguishing aspects that identify someone as a professions in a particular discipline such as counseling psychology or educational research. For example, they addressed critical thinking, metacognitive strategies, self-regulation, learning strategies, communication, and interpersonal skills as professional attributes and skills that identify someone as "being professional." Further, several participants stressed that acquiring professional skills is fundamental to navigating a graduate program and is foundational to becoming a professional in the disciplinary field. Based on my participants' distinction between two aspects of what it means to take on a professional identity, I use the term *professional identity* in this document to refer to the intertwined conceptions of having certain professional attributes and skills, and also developing a high level of proficiency in domain specific disciplinary skills. Therefore, *professional identity development* refers to the development of one's identity that associated with professional attributes, development of disciplinary skills, and socio-culturally related factors.

Major Themes

I present my findings organizing insights into three themes: Theme 1: Graduate students' professional identity seemed to progress through phases marked by milestones; Theme 2: Graduate students' professional identity developed by interacting with other individuals in several learning communities; Theme 3: Graduate students forged their

professional identity through their program experiences, defining their professional self as the acquisition of self-knowledge and self-regulation skills (being professional), disciplinary knowledge and skills (being a professional), and envisionment of a professional future self participating in a community of practice.

Theme 1: Professional Identity Resulting from Progress through Phases Marked by Milestones

There were three groups of participants who were in different phases of educational psychology graduate program in this study. The first group consisted of beginners in the program defined as students who were in their first three semesters and had not officially begun the qualifying process yet. The second group included participants who were going through or had just finished their qualifying exam. The third group includes participants who are preparing for their dissertation proposal and going through the dissertation process. The first theme in the data captured the chronological development of participants' professional identity around milestones in their graduate programs. Theme 1 is presented with three subthemes: a) "jumping into the jungle" called graduate school: beginning students, b) learning survival strategies in the jungle: intermediate students, and c) finally, "I see the light out of the jungle and I realized that I am not alone": advanced students.

Before addressing the ways that data supported this emerging theme, I would like to describe the difficulties I encountered in marking rigidly the stages or phases of development my participants were undergoing. Although I began the study with a plan to interview all participants longitudinally at least across one of the major boundaries that

made up their programs, I found from data analysis and member checking that individual differences and perceptions of their development of professional identity challenged my initial assumptions about the chronological development of professionalization the students were experiencing. Some students in their first year were already attacking the qualifying process whereas others seemed not to begin the task of the qualifying process until late into the second year. Therefore, it was especially difficult to locate the students in the middle group due to students' different ways of progressing through the program. However, I eventually found that separating into three groups helped me see their development.

Stage 1: "Jumping into the Jungle" called Graduate School

Data showed the significance of previous work and educational experiences that influenced students' professional identity development in the beginning of their doctoral graduate program. When students began the program with substantial previous professional experience, and this experience matched their current graduate training they seemed to navigate their graduate program relatively smoothly. However, those who already had established a professional identity from a previous profession or training that did not match well with their current program seemed to have a hard time accepting the role and status of being a student once again. It seemed like this adjustment impeded their motivation and acquisition of knowledge and skills. By contrast, for participants who had not build a previous professional identity, it seemed easier to adapt to a role as a student and develop their professional identity throughout their graduate program. Yet, they sometimes

seemed to struggle with developing professional attributes and skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, self-regulation, and communication that will be highlighted in Theme 3.

When students had sufficient professional work experiences. One subset of my participants included students who had a strong educational background that related to their current program in graduate school. They testified that their previous work and educational background helped them navigate graduate school, and they thought their professional work experiences helped them acquire disciplinary knowledge and skills. Sandra addressed this as follows:

> *I worked as a school psychologist for eight years before I joined the PhD. program. Since I was working in a professional environment as a school psychologist, I was pretty confident about my assessment skills. So, my progress has been a little bit faster than other students in the program. Coursework wasn't too difficult as well since I did my master's in* [professional program].

She identified that her related previous work and educational experiences helped her navigate the graduate program because her past experience aligned with her current graduate training. Another professional student Gabriella mentioned that she was working in the field for five years and she has been a professional ever since she began her job as a school psychologist.

> *I had a lot of work experiences before I joined grad school. I worked for a clinical site for several years and I went back to get my MA degree. I am a*

school psychologist, but now I can work at a higher level of the system with the PhD degree. That is why I joined the PhD program.

Moreover, she mentioned that she had already developed the necessary professional skills and mindset to be a professional before she joined the PhD program so that it was much easier for her to navigate the program. In addition, because she had already developed her professional identity as a school psychologist, graduate school training was merely enhancing her professional skills and adding a research component because her previous professional identity aligned with her present activities. Interestingly, she did not mention the common challenges that other graduate students often mentioned, communication with advisor, finding qualifying exam topic, time management, and work and life balance. However, she mentioned that the transition from working as a professional to being a student was the hardest challenge for her. In her case, professional identity development was relatively smooth compared to individuals who had a mismatched professional identity or students who did not have previous professional experience.

Among students who had substantial previous professional experience, there were those who did not have directly related experience to their graduate program. However, if they had acquired professional skills of self-regulation, communication, and problem solving, previous professional experiences still helped students to navigate and learn in their graduate program. For instance, Savannah said that she had worked in the human resources field for several years where she had learned necessary professional skills such as collaborative interpersonal skills. She stated:

I was an HR person for several years before I joined graduate school...I am a little bit older than other students so I am little bit different…my expectation is different... I learned professional skills such as how to get it done and how to work with others...like how to address issues and communicate with others...those skills are a very important aspect of being a professional.

Savannah presented herself as a professional because of her prior work experiences. However, she said she was not comfortable being called a professional counselor yet because she was only in her second year of the program, and she was still in the middle of acquiring the necessary skills to be a licensed professional counselor. Interestingly, she separated the concept of being professional from being a professional counselor. I will return to this distinction in more detail in Theme 3. Autumn commented that being professional means possessing appropriate critical thinking, communication skills, and self-regulatory strategies in the professional working environment.

Additionally, Tamara identified herself as an applied behavioral analyst. She stated:

I am an applied behavioral analyst. I got this job before I joined the graduate program. I knew what school psych was about because I was working as a clinical analyst. I am still working there. It wasn't that difficult to adjust to the program because I had some background knowledge in the field.

Tamara identified herself as an applied behavioral analyst instead of as a graduate student or a school psychologist because she had been practicing in that position for several years. In addition, Becker pointed out that he was a professional because he used

to work in a professional working environment as a teacher, and he knew what a professional person should be. Interestingly, several participants addressed that when they had already established a professional identity, their professional identity development in a graduate program was smooth.

However, they also expressed having a hard time accepting the role and status of a student. In other words, their previous professional identity acted as an initial impediment to their path in the program, either because they had to adopt a new professional identity in a new field or because they had to allow themselves to "regress" to being a student on the way to being a doctoral level professional. Kelly stated:

> *It has been hard to live as a student! I am going from 8 years of a profession where I felt very confident and I was a leader in what I did. But when I joined the program, I became a student. I am at the lowest level again. I felt like I don't know anything. So it was very hard to go from being very professional and being very confident in my work, to not confident in anything. I wasn't sure what I was doing…The thing is, I didn't understand the culture here.*

Ronda who worked as teacher for several years stated:

> *As a teacher, I didn't need to do homework…It is awful to be a student again. I was a working professional. My income was high enough so I had freedom to do whatever I wanted but now…I have become dependent again.*

Another professional program student Paula mentioned:

I worked at the children's hospital for several years before I joined the program. But going back as a student was very tough. I loved the autonomy that I had when I was working. Being a student is a big pain in the butt!

Jelena mentioned that she had majored in multimedia studies in her master's and worked in the field as a professional for a while. She said she had been struggling because she now had to depend on others [faculty members] as a student. In addition, she had a hard time seeing herself as a counselor because her background training was different. She identified that she was very different from other students. She said "They are different. I do not feel like I am one of them." She used the word *they* reflecting that she did not feel that she belonged to the group yet. In addition, she seemed as if her already established previous professional identity as a multimedia professional did not match with her present disciplinary practice.

By contrast, Lionel mentioned that he did not have any research related experiences before joined the PhD program. He had been a bilingual high school teacher for several years. He stated, "I am enjoy doing research on a team and learning about research methods. I see myself as a researcher." In his case, even if he worked as a bilingual teacher for a while, it does not seem like he established a professional identity as a teacher.

Heidi addressed that she had worked in several different places including a youth club as an activity manager and a retail store manager before she joined graduate school. She joined the educational psychology program because she liked to associate with people. She did not seem to have established any solid professional identity from her

previous work. She testified that she liked what she was doing currently, researching and teaching undergraduate classes, and that she would like to be a professor in the future.

In their testimonies, some students who already had substantial work experience before joining graduate school had not yet established a professional identity so that being a student and building professional identity from the beginning of doctoral graduate program seemed more smoother than participants who already had established a professional identity from a different disciplinary field. In addition, participants addressed that the professionalism that they had acquired from previous work experiences helped them to navigate different activities and acquire knowledge and skills from their graduate program.

In sum, data showed that previous substantial work experiences and education helped students to navigate and advance through their graduate programs because they had already acquired the necessary professional attributes and skills such as critical thinking, self-regulation, learning strategies, communication, and interpersonal skills to learn and grow in their professional discipline. Note that when professional identity was already established from previous professions or trainings, there are two cases. First, when students' previous professional identity aligned with present professional training, graduate training enhanced their existing professional identity. By contrast, when students' previous professional identity based on previous experience did not match with the professional identity they were creating in the graduate program, the existing professional identity seemed to block the building of their new professional identity and accepting the status as a student.

No substantial work experience or previous education related to the major in graduate program: There were participants who joined the doctoral graduate program directly after their undergraduate studies without substantial background knowledge and experiences. Relatively younger than the students I first decided, these students seemed to be more open minded in accepting their new roles and responsibilities as graduate students. However, they faced the task of developing professional skills such as group collaborative skills, communication skills, and self-regulation skills, and as a result, they often struggled to navigate the graduate program. These students were developing their initial professional identity through graduate training because, for the most part, their graduate training was the first professional training they had experienced. Ivy mentioned:

> *I didn't have any relevant background or prior experiences. I just as an graduated undergrad from here. To me…It is just a continuation of my undergraduate schooling. Graduate classes seem to have a very different format. I just need to read a lot. There are a lot of writing requirements as well. I am getting used to doing a million things at the same time. I am still figuring out graduate school.*

Venus also mentioned that she did not have any major related work or educational experience except her undergraduate education before she joined graduate school. Interestingly, she identified herself as a researcher instead of a school psychologist or practitioner because as a first year beginning student, she acquired substantial experience in research. It was interesting that what she experienced in the beginning of graduate program influenced how she saw herself as a researcher. From the follow-up interview

after one year, she maintained her researcher identity even though she had done several clinical practica.

Similarly, Serena who did not have background knowledge or work experience before joining graduate school identified herself as a junior researcher. She stated that she has been struggling to learn professionalism such as professional communication skills and collaborative skills from participating in a research team and working as a GRA. Her testimony aligned with other participants' comments on acquiring professional skills as a foundation to becoming a professional in the field. Interestingly, she also saw herself as a researcher. It is worth noting that participants who did not have solid professional experience saw themselves as researchers whereas participants who had work experience hesitated to identify themselves as a researcher.

Finally, there were participants in this group without a substantial previous job experience nor relevant education who had a friend or mentor who provided substantial information and knowledge about the graduate program and their professional field. They seemed to acquire second-hand experiences about the challenges and difficulties, learning and interpersonal strategies, and the overall roadmap of graduate school. These students seemed comfortable navigating the graduate program. As Lindsey stated:

> *I have a good friend of mine who graduated from this program several years ago, and she is working in the university mental and health care center now. She is the one who encouraged me to join this program, and she told me pretty much everything about graduate school. I was very aware of things that I had to do, and she helped me to make most of decisions that I had to make...like*

determining a research topic for my qualifying exam process and choosing an advisor, so I knew what to expect.

In the follow up interview, Lindsey shared that she didn't go through many of the challenges of navigating graduate school that other students undergo such as a choosing an advisor, finding financial resources, and balancing many tasks. She had been regularly participating in a weekend sports league for her general mental health per the recommendation of her friend who had graduated from the same program. She said she saw herself as a counselor but not as a professional yet.

Candace mentioned that she had two friends who had graduated from the same professional program, and from them she acquired substantial information about the program and life as a graduate student. She addressed that her prior knowledge about school and the field helped her to navigate the program; however, she still had a difficult time learning professional skills. Lastly, Savannah said that she grew up seeing her dad counseling others. She was inspired by her dad who has been a counselor, and he told her many things about the nature of counseling. However, even though she had heard quite a bit about counseling graduate programs, she still struggled to adjust to the doctoral program.

In sum, most graduate students had some relevant work or education experiences before they joined the graduate program. However, quality and amount of previous work experiences and domain specific knowledge varied from among students, and these differences played an important role in adjustment to graduate school, academic motivation, and developing a professional identity.

Data showed that students who did not have substantial experiences could build their professional identity easily in the beginning of their graduate program compared to students who had already built a professional identity in a different profession. They were developing their initial professional identity through graduate training because their graduate training was the first profession that they had. In addition, they seemed more open minded in accepting their new role and responsibilities as graduate students in their program, however they experienced challenges in developing professional skills such as working collaboratively, interpersonal communication, and self-regulation which are important components of professional identity.

Self-defining period confusion and adjustment: In the beginning of their graduate program, students experienced self-defining moment by asking themselves questions such as "who was I?", "what am I doing now?", "how can I go through this?", and "who I will be in the future?" In the beginning of a graduate program, when students go through self-defining and self-evaluation moments including whether they can successfully go through the program or not, they often experience high stress stemming from feelings of imposter syndrome. From the initial interviews, most participants in the beginning stages of graduate school defined themselves as a graduate student because most of their life activities were intertwined with being a graduate student. For example, another participant Ivy stated this:

> *I introduced myself as school psychology graduate student because that is who I am now and that is what I do most of my time. I sleep, I eat, and I exercise to be a better graduate student.*

In addition, Jelena stated about his identity:

> *I am a graduate student. Most of my identity is wrapped up with grad school because I spend most of time with work related to my program. I am a graduate student who is trying to be a professional counselor in a few years. My first year was the biggest challenge in my life. I went through an identity crisis. It was very painful in many ways. I was very confused. I thought I made the biggest mistake of my life. I was on depression medication for a while. I didn't know how to overcome my difficulties. But things became better in my 2nd year. I feel like I am coming back to myself. My first year was a rocky road.*

By *contrast*, there were participants who did not say they were graduate students because they were still going through the process of defining who they were in graduate school or who already had established a professional identity from previous work or education. For example, Wade stated:

> *I don't know who am I now. I am not sure what I am doing here. I am pretty confused...My life is very complicated because of this weird lifestyle [as a graduate student]. Things are really unpredictable in graduate school. You always feel like you have to work but you don't. You don't feel like you are accomplishing enough. Sometime, I feel sorry for myself. I am not sure who I am. I lost myself here.*

Autumn shared that she was creating herself through graduate program. She stated:

> *I think I create myself through what I do...I think being a graduate student is an opportunity to figure myself out . I hope I will be a professional psychologist one*

day but, who knows, I am in training now. I have a long way to go so who am I...I don't know yet.

Several students shared that they experienced high stress by going through self-defining stage in the beginning of graduate training, and that this stress led them to experience imposter syndrome, which demotivated them. Two participants dropped out from their program because they did not want to experience such pressure over the several years their program would required. They decided to pursue a different lifestyle. Shaun shared this before he quit the program:

I am working 70-80 hours per week. I am not sure what I am doing here and if this is what I would like to do for the rest of my life. I am experiencing imposter syndrome. I am very stressed from deadlines and too many requirements.

Leah said that she felt pressure when she heard everything that she needed to do including working, conducting research, and producing publications. She said she was freaking out about all the things that she was supposed to do with such little time. Jelena also shared about her imposter syndrome as a beginning student:

I always feel like I don't know anything. You are not worth it or capable of doing this. You need some self-compassion and it is also difficult to fight my perfectionism. I have been struggling a lot.

In addition, there were beginning students who had multiple roles that they needed to play. For example, four participants were parents who had to play the role of being a mom or dad. Usually, these participants did not have enough opportunities to

reflect on themselves or get involved in any social activities or study groups other than official classes and research meetings due to their family obligations.

For example, Brady mentioned that mostly he did not have enough time to prepare for exams and homework because of his two young daughters. He mentioned,

I felt really horrible! I was afraid that I will fail the course and at the same time afraid I will be uncaring as a father. Sadly, I became both!

He added that he did not have any room to spend time with peers in the program and sometimes he felt isolated. From his second follow up interview after one year, he also addressed that the biggest challenge had been to balance between work, school, and family. He had been hospitalized twice because of overwork and stress from multiple duties. In addition, Gabriella mentioned:

> *It's very difficult to be a mom and being a graduate student. I am not doing what I am supposed to do for school and the same thing for my son. A lot of times, I am not sure what I am doing now. I just have a limited time and energy to handle both.*

Ashley also mentioned that his family responsibilities affected his graduate student life tremendously because of time and energy limitations. He said he had to discuss many things with his wife in order to not face difficult decision-making points when family responsibilities and school schedules conflicted. All of them identified their role as a parent as more important than being a graduate student and being successful in the field. They seemed to be going through continual negotiation between being a parent versus being a graduate student with their parental identity primary and their professional

identity is secondary. Their professional identity development was not as smooth as compared to those who are focusing on their graduate training.

In sum, data showed that graduate students continuously evaluate who they were, what they were doing in graduate school, and what they would do in the future, especially when they faced some challenges from activities or commitments that they encountered in their graduate program.

Conclusion. Data showed that graduate students' past influenced their professional identity development in various ways. In addition, beginning students experienced self-defining moments when they encountered challenges from their program and as they acquired self-knowledge and self-regulation to navigate and advance in their graduate program. When students went through those self-defining and self-evaluation moments, including whether they would successfully finish the program or not, they often experienced high stress and feeling of imposter syndrome. Finally, most beginning students found it different to create a possible professional future self because they could see they would have to go through several "walls" in order to complete their degree and join their disciplinary community.

Stage 2. Learning survival strategies in the jungle

The second group of participants consisted of individuals who were going through or had finished their qualifying exams. There were participants in this group at this stage of the graduate program, students were still defining and learning about themselves, and developing their self-regulation skills to advance in their graduate program. However,

there were differences between students who were in the beginning and those who had made it into the intermediate stages.

For example, when participants who were in the intermediate stage were asked generic questions such as "who are you? Can you define yourself? How would you describe yourself to others?," answered they were graduate students first. These intermediate stage students continued to talk about their current activities and their envisioned future self in their community of practice instead of past challenges, whereas most beginning students continued to talk about their adjustment to the program and the difficulties they had in navigating the program. For example, Scarlett stated:

> *After I got over my qualifying process, I felt like the solar system was aligning, planets are coming together now. I know more about my strengths and interests. I just went through QP with a qualitative study this semester. My interest has been in language development from my undergrad days, and it matches with my advisor's interest. I feel good about it. It will be my dissertation topic as well. I am more confident in being a researcher.*

Bailey who had just completed her qualifying exam mentioned that she was now less anxious after spending some time in the program. She had figured out what she was doing and what she could do. She stated:

> *Hmm...maybe I learned what I do not want to do as well. I don't experience imposter syndrome as often as I did over the last few years. I put a lot of pressure onto myself when I heard I had to do research and publications. I was freaking out about all the things that I was supposed to do, but now I know*

there are things that I can do and there are things that I cannot do. I think I understand myself better than before.

Sydney who was preparing for her qualifying exam also addressed her experiences in acquiring self-knowledge and self-regulation:

I realized that you may know a lot more than you think but you always feel like you don't know anything. I was thinking: I am not capable of doing this. I needed some self-compassion, and I had to fight against my perfectionism. I learned that I can't always be an A student. I learned that it's okay to get B's or receive a negative evaluation. This[graduate school] is the place that you learn how to take negative feedback and how to handle it.

However, not all intermediate students were showing a sense of settling down in their identity. Danny who had just finished his qualifying exam mentioned:

I am still not sure what I am doing now. Graduate school is like Pandora's box. You never know what is in there until you open it. I think it's better in that way because if you know the future, you may not want to pursue it. I still need to go through my proposal, dissertation, internship, and postdoc. [I] still have a long way to go, so I am not sure what's going to happen along the way, and where I will end up.

In addition, Wade who was getting ready for his qualifying exam mentioned that graduate school is like living in a foreign country. He commented:

I still think I am a foreigner here. I am not sure I will get used to it or not. Even if I've spent several years here, it is still very challenging. I am not sure

what is going to happen in the future. I am still not confident that I will make it through.

Ruby who was preparing for her qualifying exam mentioned:

"What am I doing now?" I am still asking this question a lot. The demand is very high now. QP, classes, and practicums, and work, all together. The demands are almost impossible. It's not possible to survive here without the quality of resilience. I guess that is what I am developing now.

As students' identity and life were settling down into place, they seemed to have more commitment to their academics, but they often experienced some degree of burnout from high stress. This subtheme shows intermediate students' common progression in their graduate program as that they began to define who they were and put more effort into developing themselves as professionals in the field. However, they often experience burnout because they were still finding a balance between various tasks from the program and from their personal life. Further, when they were still incorporating their self-knowledge to develop self-regulation skills. For example, Danny who had just got finished the qualifying exam stated:

School related things started to get better. The biggest thing is, I didn't do anything for my personal life and I got burnt out. In my third year, I started to go to a therapist to complain about life. I was so exhausted I slept 10 hours during the weekends. And I couldn't manage anymore.

Another student Keira who just finished her qualifying exam addressed:

The biggest challenge was the time...It's like you need to do 60 different things a day. I couldn't eat so I lost so much weight...I have 30 hrs of TA, classes, and many research projects that I am committed to. On top of all that I have to be there for my clients. It's still hard to say no. It's too much, and I have no break. I am always burnt out from everything that I have to do.

Finally, Candace who had just finished her qualifying exam mentioned about her life:

I had a TA job which was a very intensive job. It was supposed to be 10 hours of work but I spent 20-30 hours because my professor was busy, but I was really frustrated because I couldn't do other things that I was supposed to do. It was a turning point for me. I realized… I just need to be me.

Finally, graduate students in this stage were still getting used to their lives as graduate students. They experienced negotiation among other identities, and in addition, they began to develop their professional identity. In other words, respecting the idea of individuals possessing different identities, professional identity must be negotiated among other identities (e.g., being a parent and being a graduate student at the same time).

Further, a professional identity also can be composed of more specific professional identities. Interestingly, the professional program students tended to separate their identities as researcher and as a practitioner because professional program students are required to build a dual identity (researcher and practitioner) or fused identity

(scientist practitioner identity). For example, Audrey who had finished her qualifying exam stated:

> *I am pretty confident about my assessment from school-based practicum, and I did supervision and assessment. My supervisor gave me good positive feedback. Now I am able to answer any questions related to assessment so my professional identity on the assessment side is pretty strong, but I don't feel same about therapy. I am not feeling confident about therapy because I am still learning.*

She comments provided a hint that there are multiple facets among clinical skills that students saw as associated with their professional identity. In addition, Lindsey who had just finished her qualifying exam addressed that she had been learning "a lot" about assessment but that she needed more training in clinical skills.

Professional program students seemed to build a practitioner identity that often overshadowed their researcher identity. Some professional students seemed less interested in developing their researcher identity because they did not see research as relevant to their future career as practitioners. In such cases, so long as they fulfilled basic research requirements of their graduate program without developing fluency in research or methodology, they envisioned as professional practitioners in the field. Consequently, these students' motivation in research-related experiences seemed lower compared to those who envisioned themselves in academia in the future.

In contrast, academic program students' core disciplinary skills were all research-related such as designing research, analyzing data, and writing manuscripts. In other words, for them, acquiring research skills was considered preparation to a professional

researcher in the future so that, these students seemed more motivated to engage in research-related activities.

Because research was the core disciplinary practice for academic program students, their professional identity development was more intertwined with their research-related skill development and activities. This phenomenon will be highlighted in Theme 3.

Additionally, there were several academic program participants who held a positions as assistant instructors which meant that their practical role was to teach undergraduates. Keira who had been teaching English writing for undergraduate students commented:

> *I taught in high school for several years. I am pretty confident about teaching and I like it. My research area is about teaching as well. I am happy that I have this opportunity because I missed teaching. I am not sure if I will be a professor or not but I hope I will teach in the future. The subject does not matter. I just like teaching.*

She had a high school teacher for several years and had developed a professional identity as a teacher. She could continue her practice in graduate school so that her teacher professional identity was being maintained and even growing. She envisioned herself as a teacher (professor) in the future. Another student, Kelly also an assistant instructor for an undergraduate class, mentioned that she had been developing her teacher identity over the last several years. She had learned different ways to engage with students and developed classroom management skills with which she now felt

comfortable. However, she felt still uncertain about the research side of her identity. In her case, she could develop or extend her previous teacher identity by teaching undergraduate students as an instructor.

In sum, professional program students' professional identity development seemed more complicated because they were required to develop both researcher and practitioner identities, whereas academic students seemed to see their roles as more integrated.

Conclusion. Data showed that, although intermediate students were still undergoing self-defining moments, they seemed to have acquired some level of self-knowledge and self-regulation that enabled them to navigate and advance in their graduate program. Because these students were still going through a certain degree of self-definition and development of appropriate self-evaluation strategies, they still seemed to experience stress and imposter syndrome occasionally, but not as much as when they were in the beginning of their program. Finally, most students in this stage experienced burnout from various academic and personal responsibilities, and were beginning to create a possible professional future self by acquiring professional disciplinary skills. However, they were aware that had still have to go through several "walls" in order to complete their degree and attain a position in the field.

Stage 3. "Finally, I see the light out of the jungle and I realize that I am not alone"

The third group included participants who were preparing for the dissertation proposal or were in the process of presenting their dissertation to their committee and completing their dissertation. In contrast to beginning and intermediate graduate

students, advanced students seemed to have come to define themselves as a professional, merging this new identity with being a graduate student. These advanced students seemed to envision a possible professional self in the future once they overcome major milestones, such as the qualifying or proposal process, which can be seen as "walls" that graduate students must get over. There seemed to be a connection between milestones that students needed to overcome and their trajectory to a future professional identity. Most beginning students were not able to see the future because they were aware that they needed to endure and succeed through several different milestones.

Further, beginning and some intermediate students seemed to redefine themselves and evaluate who they were and what they were doing in graduate school continuously, as well as what they would do in the future especially when they were faced on challenges and difficulties in their academic activities.

By contrast, advanced students seemed to have much more self-knowledge and self-regulation, and a certain degree of confidence about their practical skills that positively influenced their professional identity. For example, advanced student Leah who was preparing her dissertation proposal mentioned:

> *I would introduce myself as a doctoral student to strangers but for people who know about the field or if it is necessary to explain a little bit more detail, I will say I am a counseling psychologist ABD, and I got an internship and I am a counselor.*

In addition, Fred addressed that he was a graduate researcher researching the topic of dyslexia. He also referred to himself as a graduate student but he continued to explain his vision about educational policy and administration in the future, and he shared that currently, he was participating in several political activities. It was interesting that he extended his answer about his current identity as graduate student to include future possible identities. Bailey who just had finished her proposal could see herself in academia after she got an internship.

> *I already got an internship. It's a perfect place for me. I would like to work in a community based clinic, and I really want research to be part of my professional life. I also want to get involved in training people so..maybe adjunct? I am not sure now. I didn't want that before, but now…I would like to participate by teaching in the field. There are so many possibility in my future. I love it. After I finish internship, I would like to open a community-based assessment center for children who don't get the assessments.*

Since she just had finished her proposal and she had already landed an internship site, she seemed to be able to see her future self better especially as compared to beginning and intermediate students and compared to advanced student who had not finished their dissertation proposal. For professional students, they saw being chosen for internship as very challenging, so that fro them was, identifying their internship site is one of the biggest walls that affected how well they could envision the future.

Further, there were difference between professional program and academic program students due to the requirements of these programs. My findings showed that

most academic program students found it difficult to envision a professional future self not only because milestones that they still faced but also because of the widely held idea that the job market in academia was very tight.

Fred who is preparing for his dissertation proposal meeting mentioned that he would like to get involve an education system level profession after acquiring his degree instead of becoming a researcher in academia. He had been diligently participating in graduate student government activities in order to get to know the nature of the work and also volunteering for a political presidential camp. He addressed that he had acquired professional analytic thinking skills as well as collaboration skills from graduate training.

Interestingly, advanced students who did not address their professional identity nor mentioned anything related to a possible future self but only talked about the next hurdle that they need to overcome in order go on to the next stage. Their answers to my questions were more similar to beginning students. Adam stated:

> *I am a 4th year educational psychology graduate student but I still need to get over a lot of things in order to be a counselor. I applied for an internship but it's very difficult to be matched and then I still need to finish my dissertation. I am not sure how things will go from here.*

Scarlett who is preparing for her dissertation proposal addressed difficulties of finding an internship site and in managing the licensing process. She mentioned that she could not envision herself in the future because she still had to get over the "highest wall," internship and the licensure exam. Another advanced student, Kelly stated:

I am a graduate student but it is hard to believe I am still a student at my age. It was a rough past several years. I still do not know what I will do in the future. I wish I could get involved in more research projects...I don't feel I am well equipped for research.

From longitudinal interview and observations of these students, I noticed that there were some commonality among advanced students who did not address their professional identity nor possible future self. They seemed to lack confidence about their professional disciplinary skills such as clinical skills, assessment skills, research skills, and writing skills, and also they did not seem to be well connected to others in their program or to the professional disciplinary community. By contrast, those who addressed a future community of practice or a professional self seemed more connected to their disciplinary field and had some level of confidence on their professional disciplinary skills. It showed that their professional skills development and professional affiliation and socialization were associated with their envisionment of a future self and professional identity development.

Conclusion. As students encountered challenges in their graduate program, especially when these challenges were associated with major milestones, their future seemed darker. However, as students could check off their milestones and as they saw themselves acquires some professional skills in the advanced stages of their program, they seemed to be able to see the future self and future professional self more clearly, and this vision seemed to influence the present positively. Nevertheless, there were differences in their ability to see through the "walls" to envision a future self.

Generally, as students successfully completed each milestone, they seemed to see the future and to be able to create an imagined future self that influenced their professional identity. It is worth noting that the opacity of the walls and number of walls was different for each student. Thus, most advanced students seemed to be able to see through the last few walls so that their imagined future could influence the present. However, there were some advanced students who could not envision the future professional self because the "walls" were too high and too dense.

Further, even if participants passed their qualifying process or defended a dissertation proposal, it was difficult to say that they immediately acquired or enhanced their professional identity. For many, they did not have enough reflective time to think about what they had achieved and about their future because of various commitments and responsibilities during the semester. Lastly, there were different reasons that explained why professional program students and academic program students found it difficult to see the future over the walls. For professional program students, they faced several to high hurdles toward the end of their program such as finding an internship, establishing a postdoc position, and completing the licensure process. By contrast, academic program students' hurdles were lower and fewer, but their career choices were somewhat limited in their vision. For example, most academic program students stated they would like a faculty position but they were well aware that those opportunities were very limited, and they needed to achieve much as graduate students in order to qualify. As a result, most students were hesitant to envision themselves as a faculty member in the future, and they remained unclear about other career options besides getting a faculty position.

Theme 1 conclusion

In this theme, participants' chronological development punctuated by milestones in their graduate programs was introduced. Data showed that participants' past influenced their professional identity development in various ways. In addition, beginning students seemed to enter into a self-defining time period as they acquired self-knowledge and self-regulation to navigate and advance in their graduate program. In this beginning stage, they often experienced high stress and imposter syndrome feelings. Beginning students found it difficult to envision a possible future self because of perceptions of high "walls" they needed to scale before finishing the program. Next, most intermediate students were still going through a self-defining process, but they seemed to have acquired a certain level of self-knowledge and self-regulation to navigate from past experience. In addition, although they still seemed to experience stress and occasional bouts of imposter syndrome, these were much less than when they were at the beginning of their program. Further, most students in this stage experienced burnout from various academic and personal responsibilities, even as they began to create a possible professional future self by developing their professional disciplinary skills and participating in learning communities.

Finally, when students had off many milestones and acquired some professional skills to advance to a last stage of their program, they seemed to envision a future professional self that provided motivation for their present academic activities. Yet, there were differences in students' ability to see through the "walls" to envision a future self. In other words, the opacity of the walls and number of walls were different for each

student. Thus, most advanced students seemed able to see through the walls, but there were several advanced students who could not envision a future professional self because important milestones block in their way.

Theme 2: Graduate students' professional identity Influenced by Interacting with Others in Several Learning Communities

The previous theme introduced the developmental process through which how educational psychology graduate students' past and present experiences influenced their professional identity through their graduate training. From theme one, I learned that graduate students' professional identity development and their envisioning of a future possible professional self are reciprocally influenced. Theme 2 highlights the significance of contextual and sociocultural influences on educational psychology doctoral students' professional identity development. The focus here is on how participants' professional identity development occurred within the context of various learning communities that allowed them to envision themselves in a future community of practice even as their professional attributes and their disciplinary skills were also actively developing.

There were several different kinds of groups, *learning communities* as I call them, in which graduate students participated throughout their graduate training. The smallest and most fundamental learning community was between a student and his/her advisor. Other learning communities included relationships with peer students and with faculty members other than their own faculty advisor. Students should interact within the context of a research group, a class group, or a departmental cohort group. The participation and interaction within various learning groups allowed them to enrich their

professional skills including their professionalism, disciplinary discourse practices, and domain specific skills, such as research methodology and clinical skills. In addition, participating in various learning communities helped students realize they were a part of a larger disciplinary community of practice.

Data showed that participating in various social interactions within various learning communities contributed to with students' professional identity development. This theme will be discussed in three sub themes: a) The multiple roles played by the advisors including as a gatekeeper to the disciplinary community of practice; b) what students gained from various learning communities for their professional identity development; and c) the role of professional affiliations for professional identity development.

The multiple roles played by the advisor as a gatekeeper to the disciplinary community of practice. As a graduate student, it is common to have an advisor throughout one's graduate program. The common role of a faculty advisor is to guide students as they navigate the program until graduation as well as to prepare them for the specific disciplinary career field. This relationship between faculty advisors and students seems highly integral for students' professional identity development because students learn disciplinary content knowledge and skills from their advisors, and also often students see their advisors as mentors in the disciplinary field that they will join in the future so that they envision their future possible professional self through their advisors.

It is important to consider every human relationship as mutual, with reciprocal influences on each other. Students influence their advisors even as his/her advisors

influence them. Further, each individual student has a different relationship with their advisor because of advisors and students' interpersonal communication styles, advisors' advising experiences, students' maturity, background experiences, and other various personal situations. However, regardless of the many variables affecting the relationship, my participants attested to the significant role advisors played in influencing students envisioned possible future self in the community of practice and their professional identity. Participants addressed that their advisors provided content knowledge, assisted with information about program logistics, gave them emotional support as a mentor, and introduced a disciplinary community of practice. For example, Bailey mentioned about her relationship with advisor:

> *My advisor taught me about my dissertation topic, and my advisor introduced me to someone who is well-known in the field of my topic. There are no words for how much I learned from her. She always encouraged me about my future. She told me there are so many possibilities in my future in the field. I love it. After I finish my internship, I would like to open a community based. My advisor...is helping to fulfill my dream.*

As Bailey stated, her advisor was not only someone who provided content knowledge but also one who introduced her to other professional individuals in the field. Interestingly, she addressed her future possible self in the community of practice several times and she commented that her advisor was the one who helped her to see her future self. In her second interview, she explicitly addressed her advisor who helped her to publish an article and provided detailed feedback on her writing so that she improved her

writing skills significantly. She mentioned that she realized writing is an important professional disciplinary skill that she would like to acquire in order to be a professional in the field.

Kelly mentioned her advisor as her sounding board because her advisor was always available and made things clear for her. She also addressed that she learned how to conduct a qualitative study from her advisor and identified her advisor as a mentor. In her second interview, she added that she was hoping to be like her advisor in the future, guiding students in academia. Her advisor was not only a source of professional content knowledge but also a person who inspired her to envision herself in a future community of practice. As another example, Ruth had a positive relationship with her advisor. She appreciated that her advisor had introduced her to famous researchers and helped her improve her writing skills dramatically. She mentioned:

> *I am very thankful to my advisor. She is such a great scholar and a mentor. She guided me on my way to accomplishing a lot. It was always fun to talk to her, and she is very passionate about what she is doing. I am hoping that I will be like her in the future.*

Although all students felt that they benefitted from their relationships with advisors, those with new faculty members as advisors benefitted differently than those who had more experienced faculty advisors. For example, Audrey's advisor was a new faculty member, so she felt that they had a more parallel relationship. She stated:

My advisor is a new faculty member. We are learning this program together. She seeks out information for me, she is pushing me forward in the program, and she is very aware of my mental health.

Another student Candace also had a new faculty member as her advisor and stated:

I've been working with two faculty members now. My advisor is relatively new compared to the other one that I work with. Since she is new and not familiar with my research topic but she introduced me to another faculty member who knows a lot about my research interest. I learned a lot from him about research design and everything. My advisor is very supportive about trying something new.

When students' research interests matched with their advisers', socialization processes involving learning content and improving discourse practices (proposal writing, designing research) seemed smooth. When students saw their advisors as role models through whom they could envision the field and themselves in the field so that they developed their professional identity smoothly.

However, the relationship with an advisor was not always smooth just like any other human relationship. As I addressed in the beginning, there were some challenges in the relationship between advisors and students due to difference in their interpersonal communication styles, advisors' advising experiences, students' maturity, background experiences, and other various personal situations. For these reasons, there were students who struggled with their advisers, and the relationship seemed to hinder the professional identity development process. In these scenarios, students' professional development and

professional identity development proceeded differently than students who had a positive relationship with their advisors.

Adam said he had undergone some emotionally difficult times because his research interests did not match his advisor's research topic. He had decided to move to a different university midway through his program, a move he knew would add several years before graduating. Lindsey stated her difficulties with her advisor:

> *My relationship with my advisor has been a huge part of my stress. My advisor was out of touch for a long time. I feel like I am alone. I am going through QP by myself now. I asked him to take a look at my doc but he always only said, "looks good."*

Adam also had a difficult time communicating with his advisor. He addressed that his advisor was a relatively new faculty member and was not good at communicating with students. He said he had to take her out to lunch to initiate any conversation with her. In addition, Julia mentioned that she needed more detailed guidance for everything but she perceived that her advisor was not allocating enough attention to her.

In sum, participants who testified they saw their advisors as role models seemed to envision themselves in a future community of practice, whereas students who had some struggles with their advisers did not address a possible professional self nor a professional identity, pointing to the importance of a good relationship with one's advisor.

Other learning communities and professional identity development. Learning communities sometimes arise from one-on-one relationships among students, from group

class projects, departmental gatherings, from joining and belonging to a research team, as well as within work collaboration situations. In addition, within learning communities in a graduate program, students seemed to build their professional identity by playing a professional role and practicing disciplinary discourse. Further, through participating in various learning communities in a graduate program, students could envision the bigger professional community they were joining. Participants shared that they tried to get together for occasional dinners and tea time with fellow students simply to relax and support each other emotionally. However, I noticed from professional students' informal social gatherings, that they after started with personal issues in the beginning however eventually they would move to talk about some milestone in the program, job market, and their future.

I noticed from attending three departmental gatherings that students naturally formed spontaneous and flexible learning communities in which they shared information about graduate school and also disciplinary knowledge. Interestingly, during the academic program departmental gatherings, I noticed the following pattern of casual group formation: in the beginning, students congregated with their year cohort, then after a certain time, they joined groups on similar research topics, their same research team peers, or students with the same faculty advisor. Towards the end of the gathering, there were more students and faculty members interactions.

Linda spoke of the value of peer level learning communities in navigating her program and in beginning to see himself as a professional.

It was not possible to have come this far without my friends' [in the program] support because "others always know what I don't know." When we gathered, we talked about all kinds of things about school and life. We are surviving this jungle called graduate school together by sharing surviving strategies. I learned how to be professional. How to talk like a professional counselor. How to act like a professional counselor. All of that is very important when I will be in the practicum site.

In some instances, relationships between graduate students seemed similarly influential for students to come to see themselves as professionals in their disciplines. Bailey stated:

It wasn't possible to come this far without Aaron's help. He really saved my life. I would have quit this program a long time ago if Aaron did not help me to overcome some of my difficulties. When I had the most difficult time, he was there to tell me that I am not the only one who is going through a tough time. Not only did he teach me a lot about this field, he also told me how to control my emotions and what is a professional way to communicate with others when they do not understand what I am talking about. I appreciate him so much.

Note that Bailey and Adam both had had work experiences that were not related to their area in the graduate program. Adam shared that he saw his relationship with Sam like a platoon on the battlefield. Interestingly, Adam did not share the importance of social support as much as Bailey did, as he described that he had been alone throughout his journey in the program. According to a second follow-up interview, I found that he

did not have a strong sense of professional identity even as a 5th year student. He addressed that he did not have enough research skills nor counseling skills to be called a professional yet. It is worth highlight that his concept of being a professional counselor was highly weighted on proficiency in professional skills whereas other students identified being a professional as both professional skills proficiency as well as association with a professional group.

Next, participants shared that they saw coursework as beneficial to becoming a future professional practitioner or researcher. The various learning communities embedded in courses (i.e., dyad with professor, whole class, project teams, and informal study groups) aided in the acquisition of disciplinary content knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing their professional identity. In other words, coursework served to create opportunities for learning communities. For example, Nicole addressed about research skills development:

> *I liked all classes that I have taken. Especially, I enjoyed learning about statistics classes. I think it's a very important skill to have to become a researcher. I always wanted to have a better understanding of research design and methods. Class group projects helped me to have a hands-on experiences. I think stats classes are very necessary to be a researcher.*

In addition, Nicole reported that research methodology classes with their class group projects forced her to understand statistics and improve her writing skills because she had a chance to receive feedback from other students. In addition, Keira stated:

I liked classes that I've been taking. It was nice to hear what other people think about certain issues on research analysis. It's hard to learn everything by myself. It's a good place that I can meet other students and share research interest as well. I can imagine what is going to happen when I get a real job in the research field.

In addition, participants pointed to the importance of knowing how to work together when they conduct research and write manuscripts. They could develop various collaboration through research teams in which they participated. Venus addressed the importance of knowing how to collaborate among research team members to be a professional researcher. She stated:

Research is collaborative work. I write something then someone edits it. I did not know how to write together before but now I learned by writing a proposal together for our research team. I realized from my research experiences that it is all about a collaborative process. It is important *to know how to work with other people as a researcher. You can only learn this by working with others in a team.*

Lionel also mentioned the importance of a research team as a learning community to acquire collaborative skills:

I like my research team*. It's very collaborative. I've been able to see the process like IRB. I was doing IRB stuff...It's nice to have someone who understands what I am going though. I am growing as a researcher in the team.*

Conversely, there were participants who did not have much opportunity to get involved in social activities in learning communities other than official research

meetings, reducing their chance to build rapport with other students. For example, graduate students who had a spouse or children mentioned that having a family affected their graduate student life tremendously because of time limitations from other commitments. They reported that they faced difficult decision-making points when family responsibilities and school schedules conflicted, so that they had to spend time and energy to manage and balance two different roles. They experienced physical and emotional challenges from the balancing act.

These participants stated that they "never had time to hang out," to socialize with other students and often struggled when trying to collaborate on research projects. Danny mentioned that when he did not have enough time to prepare for midterms because his two-year-old daughter was sick, he said "I felt really horrible! I am afraid that I will fail the course and afraid I will be uncaring as a father." He added that he did not have any time to spend with peers in the program and sometimes he feels isolated. Further, Wade did not have an opportunity to build rapport among peers or his research team, and mentioned:

> *We meet once a week. It's* nice *to hear what advanced students go through…I do not hang out with my cohort as much because my cohort is very competitive instead of collaborative. We don't click with each other. We are very different. We were all competing.*

Interestingly, participating in a learning community seemed a strong factor in developing professional identity for graduate students. However, for those who did not

have a chance to participate in such learning communities, acquisition of professional skills seemed the strongest factor to developing their professional identity.

Professional affiliations and professional identity development. In this sub-theme, the significance of professional affiliation on participants' professional identity development will be discussed. Different professional affiliations allowed graduate students opportunities to contribute to a professional organization while they were in their graduate program as student representations. Also, participating in professional conferences specialized or training associated with such organizations allowed some students to be affiliated with other professionals in the field. These professional affiliations can be seen as a magnified version of learning communities in their graduate program. Through establishing professional affiliations, individuals could envision themselves and then, move beyond simply envisioning themselves to building actual relationships in the professional community of practice. They through such opportunities, some students could practice being a member of that professional community in some capacity.

Further, participants addressed that association with other peers and experts in the field influenced the development of their emerging professional identity. When graduate students participated in conferences with professionals from other institutions, they seemed to acquire a sense of themselves as professionals, as they practiced professional discourse skills, including interpersonal communication and negotiation.

In other words, various opportunities to participate in different types of learning communities encouraged students to develop their disciplinary discourse practices during

their graduate training. Through these learning communities, students developed a sense of professional affiliation even as they acquired professional discourse skills. For example, Danny discussed his professional identity development within an organization in which he was working:

> *Professional identity? Yes. I* am *a professional and I have a strong professional identity...I am a professional researcher because I am currently working with other professional researchers in a professional nonprofit research organization and producing professional reports.*

His comment provided the significance of affiliation with professional individuals and organization, and also producing some results in the professional field that is closely associated with professional identity development.

Participants also testified that professional conferences were a place where they could build their professional relationship with other professionals in the field as well as acquire professional knowledge. Students were aware that researchers participate in conferences to present their studies and meet other scholars in the field. They experienced different events during conferences that enhance professional identity such as building a professional relationship with other individuals in the field, presenting their studies as a contribution to the community of practice, and acquiring a sense of new disciplinary knowledge building. Thus, professional affiliations seemed highly associated with graduate students' professional identity development. For example, Scarlett mentioned:

> *I was attending four weeks training in Europe. I enjoyed my time a lot because I got a chance to talk to people who are interested in the same topic. I felt like I*

was a professional researcher when I gave a talk and shared my ideas with others from everywhere. I felt like I am a part of a big intellectual family. Yes, I felt like I am a researcher when I was with them.

In addition, Kelly mentioned about her conference experiences:

I met a lot of people from AERA. I built a good relationship with people who are from different schools, and I still keep in touch with them. I feel like I am a researcher when I am participating in conferences. I know a lot of famous people in the field because of attending conferences. I love to talk to them. Many famous people in the field acknowledged my research. Yes. Definitely, I am a researcher. When I present my research, we are kind of equal.

Other participants also addressed that getting to know professionals in the field helped them to feel belongingness to the professional community of practice. Scarlett stated:

My advisor sent me to a conference and training during the summer. I got a chance to meet many experts in my field. It was such a great experience. I learned so much about my field and what is going on now. One researcher even mentioned the possibility of joining her research team as a postdoc when I graduate. I was very happy to hear this and I felt personally acknowledged.

However, there were a few participants who did not see the necessity of participating in conferences or did not have a chance to build relationships with professionals in the field. Linda mentioned about conferences:

I attended conferences but I just went there to present and come back to my room to get some rest. I don't like conferences because there are too many people that I don't know. I don't spend time with others during the conference. Plus, I am not interested in it because I will be a practitioner. I don't think I will be a researcher.

Interestingly, her testimony showed that her possible self shaped her engagement at the conference as opposed to her possible self being shaped by her experience at the conference. It is possible that only students in the professional programs experience, as I briefly addressed in theme 1, have established a strong enough sense of a professional future self as a practitioner that they do not ever feel the need to keep the possibility of becoming a researcher open.

There were several different ways that graduate students could build professional affiliations while in graduate school, including working in related organizations or participating in professional conferences. Data showed that establishing professional affiliations was important to professional identity development because participants envisioned themselves through these professional associations, and their affiliations provided a sense of belongingness to the community of practice. These professional organizations seemed to represent a magnified version of learning communities in their graduate program. In other words, through establishing professional affiliations, individuals envisioned themselves in the disciplinary community of practice.

Theme 2 conclusion. There are different types of learning communities in which graduate students can participate. There are some formal learning community settings including advisor-student, peer researcher team, work places, and informal learning communities like social gatherings among cohort members. My data showed that these various types of learning communities seemed to be an essential contributor to building students' professional identity by playing professional roles within learning communities and developing their professional disciplinary discourse practices.

Further, participating in professional conferences seemed to offer a place in which graduate students developed professional affiliations as well as acquired professional discourse skills including interpersonal communication and negotiation. Through participating in conferences, graduate students could envision themselves in the field and develop belongingness to the community of practice by presenting their research, discussing with other researchers, and developing personal relationships with other experts in the field. Graduate students recognized that they were part of a larger community of practice, and this phenomenon enhanced their professional identity development.

Theme 3: Graduate Students' Professional Identity Forged through their Program Experiences, Defined as "Being Professional" and "Being a Professional," and Reflected the Envisionment of a Future Professional Self

Previous themes captured how graduate students struggled to define who they were in the beginning of their graduate program; however, they learned about themselves by going through graduate training and by participating in different communities as they

developed their professional identity. Throughout their graduate training, students encountered various opportunities to associate with peers, faculty members, and other experts in learning communities, and these interactions provided chances for them to acquire necessary disciplinary skills. In this final theme, I organize what are significant markers of a professional identity development throughout their graduate training. There are three sub-themes: being professional, being a professional, and envisioning a future possible self as a professional in this field.

According to participants' own definitions of what a *professional identity* means, they mentioned professional identity as professionalism (being professional) which included developing professional attributes such as critical thinking, problem-solving, ability to negotiate, self-reflection, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills. As for "being a professional," students were referring more specifically to proficiency in disciplinary professional skills. Thus, participants seemed to develop a professional identity as they acquired necessary professionalism and disciplinary practices. As well, in the process of graduate training, students created possible future self, and this phenomenon was significantly related to professional identity development.

"Being professional" Means acquiring Professional Attributes and Skills as a Foundation to Being a Professional in the Field. Participants provided definitions of *professional identity* as including professionalism (being professional), that includes professional attributes such as being dependable, trustworthy, smart, and hardworking. In addition, they explicitly addressed professional skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, negotiation, self-reflection, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills as a

necessary foundation for acquiring professional disciplinary skills. When asked about "being professional," Danny responded:

> *Are you asking me about being professional or a professional like an expert in the field? I would say I am a professional person because I trained as a teacher over the past several years. I know how to talk and behave as a professional person but I am not an expert researcher yet. But I still see myself as a professional researcher.*

Kelly also addressed being a professional in the field, stating:

> *Yes. I am professional person. I think like a professional, but then again, I think being professional is a little bit different than being a professional psychologist...I think I am professional but just not a professional psychologist yet.*

Interestingly, Adam pointed out that there are professional counselors in the field who do not practice professionalism, despite his belief that professionalism should be an essential requirement for becoming a professional in the field. Note that for professional program students, they cannot legally practice as a professional without credentials, but one can acquire credentials without internalizing a sense of professionalism, and Adam was referring to this possibility as well as the possibility of exhibiting professionalism without being a professional. With these comments is where I saw a major difference between the academic and the professional programs. In the academic program, Jake felt that his mastery of professional skills made him a professional even in the absence of expertise. By contrast, Adam, in the professional program, asserted he was mastering the

professional skills but could not call himself a professional in the field for lack of expertise, degree, and license. Participants addressed critical thinking, problem-solving, negotiation, self-reflection, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills as professional skills that they associated with a professional identity. For example, Danny discussed critical thinking as a professional attribute:

> *I think what I have acquired by going through a graduate program is that I think like a researcher. I mean, I can analyze problems and approach issues in a more scientific way. I think that is the biggest change that I noticed.*

In addition, Fred also mentioned critical thinking as part of the professional attributes that he acquired from graduate training:

> *I think being a researcher is all about critical thinking. What I learned from associating with other professionals in graduate school was how to present my ideas more professionally, especially when there are disagreements. As a professional, you should be able to address issues and provide appropriate answers. I think I am improving in that respect.*

Danny pointed out that problem solving, conflict management, and communication skills are all important professional attributes. Additionally, participants addressed that they gained self-regulation skills such as time management and emotional regulation from overcoming various challenges of their graduate program, which they saw as an important outcome of graduate school and a necessary foundation to being a professional in their disciplinary field. For example, Keira mentioned the importance of

time management and self-regulation as professional skills that she could acquire from graduate training:

> *I had a TA job. I had to spend so much time on it. I couldn't do everything. Just...too many things to do. I needed to figure out how to balance it all and what to give up. I just couldn't do everything. I think self-regulation and self-care is the thing that you forget in the beginning of graduate school. You feel like you have to do everything well, but it's not possible. Graduate school forces you to learn about yourself and self-regulation. I think it's very important in order to be a professional in my field.*

In addition, Audrey addressed the importance of goal setting strategies as a sign of being a professional:

> *In the beginning [of my clinical practicum], it was hard to say no to clients. So it became a snowball. I had to deal with so many things and had no break. So I had to redefine my lifestyle and my goals. I had to figure out how to make it balance and fine tune priorities because I was burning out from too much work. As a professional, work/life balance is important.*

Further, Wade shared about his relationship with his advisor. He stated that he found it difficult communicating with his advisor about sensitive issues. However, he recognized he needed to develop professional interpersonal skills as one of the fundamental skills of becoming a professional in the field.

In sum, participants shared the significance of being professional to becoming a professional in their disciplinary field. They actively sought out ways of becoming a

professional person who had developed critical thinking, problem solving, and various self-regulation strategies including time management, self-care, emotional regulation, conflict management, and interpersonal communications skills. Finally, throughout graduate training, graduate students recognized various chances to develop their professional skills, and the development of professional attributes seemed significantly associated with their professional identity development.

"Being a Professional": Professional Domain Knowledge and Disciplinary Skills that Enhance Individual's Professional Identity. Professionalism was introduced as one side of professional identity, but another meaning to which students referred was that of being an expert (being a professional) in their professional disciplinary field. When they referred to "being a professional," they meant, more specifically, proficiency in disciplinary professional skills such as content knowledge, research, assessment, and counseling skills. Specifically, being a professional for professional program students meant they had completed enough practicum hours that they could apply for and get accepted at an internship site, where they would work for a year, take licensing exams as required, and finally become an APA (American Psychology Association) accredited psychologist. In this sub theme, the significance of acquisition of domain specific skills to develop students' professional identity will be discussed.

Acquisition of disciplinary knowledge and research skills. It is worth noting that major differences between students in academic and professional program because they envisioned themselves as different kinds of possible selves. For example, professional identity for a practitioner can involve research, but it mostly involves

working with clients. Students in the academic areas can participate in various industries when they finish their program, but many, if not most, seemed to want to continue working in research. The educational psychology graduate programs in this study focused on training graduate students to conduct research; therefore, acquiring research-related knowledge and skills was critical to making successful progress in the program. In other words, graduate students were required to acquire necessary skills to design and conduct research and to be able to produce quality research papers in their professional area. They had opportunities to develop research skills by going through a qualifying process, writing a dissertation proposal, and completing the dissertation, and participating in research teams, research practica, and professional conferences. Practicum and clinical requirements for professional students will be introduced later in this theme.

Participants identified that they saw as mandatory to acquire disciplinary knowledge and skills such as research skills for academic students and some professional program students, and clinical skills for professional students throughout graduate training to be a professional in the field. For example, Thomas addressed that he saw himself as a researcher by improving his research skills:

> *I see myself as a researcher. [I am] still developing my skills but it depends…I acquired statistical analysis skills so I know how to look at quantitative data. Through classes, research projects, and from my work [at an affiliated research center] I am improving myself as a researcher.*

In addition, Kelly stated:

When I joined the program, I didn't know anything about research but now it's going super well. I am very proud of my improvements. I think I have been developing my research abilities well...I learned a lot about research from my GRA. I think I can say I am a researcher now because I am comfortable with what other researchers do.

By contrast, when students did not think they were acquiring the necessary research skills, they did not see themselves as capable researchers, which may have hindered their professional identity development if they endorsed a possible self as a researcher. For example, Wade mentioned:

Research is a daunting process. I need someone to walk me through the process. I wish there were baby steps for newborn baby researchers. Research is the name of the game, but I didn't get any guidance. I wish it was built into the program. I am sure a lot of people are feeling lost.

When Victor said that "Research is the name of the game" revealed his belief in the centrality of research skills to his field, and his sense that he "[needed] someone to walk [him] through the process" speaks to his sense that he was far from possessing the research skills and knowledge that he felt he needed to become his possible professional self. In addition, Kelly felt unsure, connecting whether she saw herself as a researcher to different aspects of the research process:

I am still having a hard time coming up with a research idea and rationale, so although I do feel like I am a researcher because I can collect data, I am not

comfortable bringing up research questions… But I was on a different research team, and I worked on the research process so I guess I am a researcher.

Bailey also addressed that she was struggling with research because she did not have enough opportunities to get involved in studies. She was not certain she would be able to conduct research in her clinical practice, which led her to experiment with possible selves in which her qualifications as a professional included research, but she was not bound to that particular envisionment. However, I noticed from data analysis that there were some differences between academic program students and professional program students. For example, academic program students' core disciplinary knowledge and skills were meanly all research-related skills including designing research, methodology, and writing skills so that eventually they should be able to produce professional peer-reviewed journal papers as independent researchers, if they hoped to remain in academia. In other words, their professional identity development seemed more intertwined with the development of research-related skills than professional students. By contrast, for professional program students, the qualification to be a "professional" in their field did not require them to be researchers. Research was an option whereas other measures of professional achievement were not.

In other words, there were differences between students in professional programs and students in academic programs in acquiring research related knowledge and skills. For example, Audrey mentioned that she did not enjoy statistics classes because she thought it was not practical and she was not interested in research. She expressed that she would like to be practitioner because she felt that writing papers and submitting them for

review would make her feel like a student forever. In her case, her envisioned future self was that of a clinical practitioner, not a researcher, so that she was not motivated to enrich her research skills during her graduate program because the acquisition of researcher skills was not associated with her professional identity development. Similarly, Bailey did not see the value of coursework. She stated:

> *I am pretty lukewarm about coursework. I am not sure how general educational psychology classes will help me in my profession as a school psychologist. I also don't see the point of stats classes. I just need to know one analysis that I will use for my dissertation. I am already overwhelmed by practicum so I couldn't spend much time [on stats classes]. My practicum is much more important for my future career as a school psychologist. I don't think I will get involved in research in the future.*

In a second interview, Bailey shared the order of her priorities: first her clients at her practicum placement site, next her duties as a helper on her advisor's research project for which she was receiving her funding, and as a distant third, her coursework.

In sum, a smooth acquisition of necessary professional disciplinary skills seemed highly associated with students' endorsement of a researcher identity, and there were differences between students in the professional programs and students in the academic programs about acquiring research related knowledge and skills. Although the departmental requirements included common research requirements as milestones for both professional and academic students, research skills for the professional program students were not seen as relevant for their future career, particularly if they were

choosing a practitioner-oriented career. In other words, for some students, simply doing the minimum to fulfill research requirements was enough, and they saw themselves as being able to become a professional practitioner without being fluent in research or methodology.

Disciplinary discourse skills and writing. Participants identified three major components to professional disciplinary discourse practices, reading, speaking, and writing, that they needed to acquire during graduate training in order to be a professional researcher and/or practitioner. Interestingly, beginning students recognized the importance of needing to re-learn how to read as important discourse skills. For example, Owen who was in his second year of a professional program addressed reading as a necessary skill for himself, saying:

> *There were a lot of readings so I had to learn how to read. It is important to becoming a good researcher.*

Fred also stated that reading was important disciplinary discourse ability to being a researcher:

> *I like the classes I've been taking, and there was an adjustment to reading and discussing each topic. There is a lot of information that I need to acquire. I think reading is a fundamental skill to be a researcher. Eventually, you need to know how to read and write journal papers.*

Additionally, students identified the need to learn to talk in ways that reflected disciplinary discourse practices. Kelly commented that she felt she was a researcher when she was talking to her colleagues about research topics and noticed that she had learned

"research talk." She explained "research talk" as knowing how to describe methods of research, knowing the theoretical construct language, and talking like a reviewer. Another participant, Jelena, mentioned that learning how to "talk" like a professional was important:

> *I learned how to be professional from senior students in my program. I learned how to talk like a professional counselor and how to act like a counselor. All of that is very important when I will be in my practicum site as a counselor.*

As Jelena addressed, among necessary discourse practices, producing professional peer-reviewed paper was one of the products that students saw they needed to able to do as a researcher, so that writing skills became a core skill for these students. However, these were only a few, mostly advanced, students who addressed writing as a core disciplinary skill that they would like to develop in order to participate in their disciplinary practice community. Linda recognized writing as a core skill that she had to develop as a researcher, and she added that she had to learn how to write collaboratively when working in research teams. Linda stated,

> *The thing is, I did a lot of psychological report writing. These are very dry and objective. But research paper is a different type of writing. I tend to write dry, but she* [her advisor] *goes…"There is no you in this writing. There is no passion in your writing. Just bring yourself in here."*

Producing peer-reviewed papers seemed to foster graduate students' professional identity. Participants testified that when they worked on professional writing products,

including conference proposal, book chapters, and journal articles, they felt a strong sense of accomplishment as a researcher. Danny stated:

> *I am a researcher because I conducted research with my advisor, and we submitted a manuscript to a journal.*

Ronda addressed that she recognized herself as a researcher when conference proposals and journal papers to which she had contributed were accepted. She added that she wanted to be a research professor in the future and identified writing skills as core skills she would need. Two advanced students addressed the importance of knowing how to engage in collaborative writing to be a professional researcher. Candace stated:

> *Research paper writing is collaborative work. I write something then someone will edit. I did not know how to write together before, but now I've learned by writing a proposal together for our research team. It is all about a collaborative process. It is important to know how to work with other people as a researcher.*

Finally, there were some differences between academic and professional program students. Not all professional program students included research in their envisionment of their future selves, and when that was the case, writing skills were seen as less important to their sense of themselves as professionals. In other words, for some students who already knew they would not be academic researchers in the future, acquisition of written discourse was not significantly associated with their professional identity. In other words, their professional identity could develop without becoming fluent in writing discourse practice.

In sum, the three major components of professional disciplinary discourse practice (reading, speaking, and writing) seemed to contribute to students' professional identity development throughout their graduate training. My participants attested to the importance of such discourse practices in helping them see themselves as a researcher.

In particular, several advanced students identified writing as an especially key discourse skill as a researcher, and the many learning communities in and out of graduate school were learning grounds to practice their newly developing discourse skills and emerging professional identities. Participants testified that producing peer-reviewed manuscripts for journal publication seemed to influence greatly on their professional identity.

Assessment/clinical skills for professional program students. There were specific clinical practicum requirements that only professional program (school psychology and counseling psychology) students were required to accomplish. Professional program participants mentioned that their practicum helped them acquire necessary assessment and clinical skills. Because professional program students were likely to become practitioners, it was mandatory for them to acquire practical assessment and clinical skills in order to be a professional psychologist in their field. Therefore, the acquisition of practical skills was a core disciplinary practice associated with their professional identity, more so than research skills that they saw as only necessary to fulfill graduate school milestones. For example, Bailey mentioned that she did not feel she was a psychologist until she became engaged with clients and had the chance to practice her skills.

However, since acquiring substantial hands on experience with patients through her practicum, she began to see herself as a psychologist. She stated that her practical experiences had helped her tremendously to see herself as a psychologist. In addition, Audrey addressed her counseling practicum experiences:

> *I like practicum a lot more than in class training. I learn more when I actually do. I think I am more comfortable to give therapy now than before because I've learned a lot from my practicum site but it is very difficult to deal with patients. I need to make myself available for them. But I feel like I am a psychologist because my patients call me so, and I provide therapy.*

Thus, when students received positive feedback about their performance from patients or from their practicum site supervisor, it seemed significantly positively to influence their professional identity. In addition, participants distinguished between their core clinical skills such as assessment and therapy. Lindsey mentioned that she was okay with assessment but not comfortable with giving therapy so that she was not yet comfortable being called as a counselor. Her comments provided a hint that there might be multiple facets for clinical skills associated with professional identity that I addressed in Theme 1. Lindsey stated:

> *I am pretty confident about my assessment from school based practicum and I did supervision and assessment. My supervisor gave me good positive feedback. Now I am able to answer any of the questions related to assessment, so my professional identity on the assessment side is pretty strong, but I don't feel the*

same about therapy. I am not feeling confident about therapy because I am still learning.

However, when students had negative practicum experiences, it seemed to hinder their present professional identity development and to put barriers in their future trajectory of a professional self. For example, Candace stated:

My practicum site supervisor told me that I am not a good candidate to be a counselor. He suggested me to change my career, but he didn't explain much about it. I was very shocked and discouraged...I was considering leaving the program. It took me a while to overcome the idea that I will not be a good candidate to be a counselor.

Practicum training experience seemed very important because it provided opportunity for students to gain relevant disciplinary skills and also to receive feedback on their assessment and clinical skills. In addition, practicum experiences allowed students to be associated with professionals in their field, establishing a strong learning community that stimulated their professional identity development. However, individuals who had negative experiences in practicum seemed to retreat in their professional identity development.

In sum, it showed the importance of acquiring professional attributes and disciplinary skills that allowed students to develop their professional identity. Developing disciplinary discourse practices helped them see themselves as a researcher because they could participate in specific disciplinary communities of practice and engage in specific disciplinary discourse, helping them to realize what set apart their field from other

disciplines. Among three professional disciplinary discourse practices, reading, speaking, and writing that contribute to students' professional identity development throughout their graduate training, several advanced students identified writing as the key discourse skill as a researcher.

Especially, participants testified that producing peer-reviewed journal publications seemed to enhance their professional identity. Further, different kinds of learning communities in and out of graduate school offered learning grounds to acquire professional knowledge and information, practice their newly developing discourse skills, and reflect on their emerging professional identities.

How a Possible Future Self can be Created from Various Activities in Graduate Training and Influence Students' Professional Identity Development. The last sub theme summarize how graduate students create their a possible future self throughout various graduate training and the association with their professional identity development. The previous themes explained that students' past professional experiences and present academic experiences influenced their professional identity as they came to envision a future self in a future community of practice.

In addition, data showed the significance of learning communities as a place in which they can acquire professionalism as well as professional disciplinary practices. All of these factors coalesced into students' envisionment of a possible future self that then became another strong influence on their professional identity development. In other words, graduate students' professional identity development and their envisioning of a

future possible professional self mutually and reciprocally influenced each other throughout their graduate training within the context of a learning community.

Interestingly, when students were undergoing through self-defining and self-evaluation moments including whether they could successfully finish the program, they often experienced high stress stemming from feelings of imposter syndrome. In such cases, students found it difficult to create a possible professional future self because they knew they had to go over several "walls" in order to complete their degree and join the professional community of their field. The data suggested that the opacity of the walls and number of walls were different for each student. Thus, some students seemed to be able to see through the walls so that their imagined future could influence the present; however others could not envision the future professional self because the walls were too high and too dense. In other words, when students experienced some challenges to accomplishing program milestones, the future seemed darker.

For example, when I asked students who had not yet gone through the qualifying exam process about their possible future professional self in their discipline, they shared some details of their imagined future self as a counselor, professor, or therapist at the beginning of the interview. However, they after returned to the story about the first wall that they needed to go through. Tamara mentioned:

> *I don't really know what I will do in the future because it's my first year but I would like to gain more research experiences. I would like to do research, teaching and clinical practice. I think I want to be a professor but I just need to see what kind of experiences I will get in this program. I just need to get over QP*

and practicum...I don't even have time to think about the future because I already have too much things to do.

In Tamara's testimony, she described blocks to her ability to envision the future self that related to previous sub-themes such as acquisition of professional skills, getting over milestones, and having little time to reflect on the future. Most participants could not reflect on their future due to various academic and work responsibilities during the semester. There were several students who also showed this bounce back phenomenon. Jimmy also mentioned:

My goal is to be a professor in the future. I'd like to research and practice at the same time. But I am just getting ready for the QP now. I have very little preparation for that but… I try to narrow down my topic now. So I am not sure how my future will be. I just need to jump over the first hump first, then I can think about it.

Further, Autumn also addressed that she did not know what she would do in the future because she had to get over qualifying, proposal, dissertation, internship, and postdoc. She also mentioned that she has to gain many necessary skills to be a professional counselor or professor. Academic student Lionel mentioned:

I am preparing my QP now. I am not too worried about it. But one of faculty members told me that I am not preparing myself for the job market. He told me that I should produce more papers in order to get a job in academia the future...I am not sure I would like to be in academia now. I just want to go to Mexico and become a librarian there.

During a graduate student social gathering, Ruby mentioned:

> *I am not sure what I will do in the future. Get a faculty job is extremely difficult now. I would imagine I will get a job in administration in academia first and I will see...*

During a research meeting, Nicole reflected on her future:

> *My advisor told me that I need to produce all possible papers as soon as possible in order to get a faculty job in academia. But, I am not sure I would like to be in that kind of pressure. It seems like a faculty job is very tough, and I am not sure I would like to live that kind of life.*

For these students, it did not seem like their first hurdle, the qualifying exam, had been a block. However, they are well aware of the job market so that they could not envision themselves in the discipline in the future. In their case, perceptions of a tight job market became a wall that blocked a vision as a researcher.

There were differences in the reasons supplied by students in the academic and professional programs students that reflected why it was difficult to envision the future. For professional program students, they needed to get over high hurdles toward to the end of their program such as finding an internship, a postdoctoral position, and the licensure process. For academic program students, the hurdles that they needed to overcome were lower and fewer than for professional program students. However, their career choices somewhat limited in their vision. In other words, most academic program students wanted to be a professor but they were well aware of how limited were those opportunities, and they were not certain what other options they had.

On the other hand, as students checked off milestones, they seemed more able to see the future self, and their future professional self seemed to influence their present self positively, although there were differences in their ability to see through the walls to envision the future self. Advanced students could see the future better, as they had overcome more hurdles than beginning students. Linda could see herself in academia after getting an internship. She stated:

> *I already got an internship. It's a perfect place for me. I would like to work in a community-based clinic, and I really want research to be part of my professional life. I also want to get involve in training people.*

She did not mentioned about wanting to be involved in academia in her first interview that conducted at the end of her second year. At the second interview, she had just finished her dissertation proposal and already had landed an internship site, and she seemed able to see her future self better compared to her earlier interview. Note that for professional students, getting an internship site was judged as very challenging, so that it became one of the biggest wall for them blocking their vision of their future.

Further, there were difference between professional program and academic program students due to the requirements of these programs. Data showed that most academic program students found it difficult to envision a professional future self not only because milestones still stood in their way but also because of the commonly held idea that the job market in academia was very tight.

Fred who was preparing for his proposal mentioned about his possible future self that he would like to get involved in an education system level profession after acquiring a degree instead of becoming a researcher in academia. He had been diligently participating in graduate student government activities in order to get to know the nature of the work and also volunteering for a political presidential campaign. He addressed that he had acquired professional analytic thinking skills as well as collaboration skills from graduate training. His testimony aligned with Theme 1 about the development of a professional attitude and skills that accompanied professional identity development.

Interestingly, a few advanced students did not address their professional identity nor their possible future self. Instead, they talked about the next hurdle that they needed to overcome at order to be in the next stage. Their answers were more similar to beginning students.

> *I am a 4th year educational psychology graduate student but I still need to get over a lot of things in order to be a counselor. I applied for an internship but it's very difficult to be matched, and then I still need to finish my dissertation. I am not sure how things will go from here.*

Scarlett addressed that she was hoping to present her dissertation proposal soon. She also mentioned difficulties of finding an internship site and the licensure process. Another advanced student Thomas stated:

> *I am a graduate student, but it is hard to believe I am still a student at my age. It was a rough past several years. I still do not know what I should do in the future.*

I wish I can get involved in more research projects...I don't feel I am well equipped for research.

There were some commonalities among advanced students who did not address their professional identity nor talk about a possible future self. These students seemed to lack confidence about their professional disciplinary skills such either clinical, assessment, research, or writing skills, or some combination, and they did not seemed to be connected to others in their program or to the professional disciplinary community.

Contrastingly, those who talked about their future community of practice or professional self seemed to be more connected to their disciplinary field and had some level of confidence in their professional disciplinary skills. Their professional skills development and professional affiliation and socialization appeared to be allowed them to envision a future self and to express a more well-formed professional identity.

This phenomenon was linked to Theme 2 in which I found that participating in professional conferences and professional development programs offered graduate students an occasion to envision themselves in the field and to develop belongingness to the scholarly community by presenting their research, discussing their ideas with other researchers, and developing personal relationships with experts in the field. Through these experiences, graduate students expressed how they were coming to realize that they were part of a larger community of practice, enhancing their professional identity development.

Finally, as mentioned at the beginning of this theme, as time went on students seemed to acquire necessary disciplinary skills so that they could envision themselves as

a professional. It seemed clear that a simultaneous interaction between the acquisition of disciplinary skills and successfully completing milestones were both strong positive influences on students' professional identity development.

In sum, at the beginning of their graduate program, most graduate students underwent an identity searching and defining period that seemed to settle down as they learned about themselves by acquiring self-knowledge. In addition, they developed disciplinary professional skills as newcomers in their professional community of practice, and most found it difficult to envision a possible future professional self.

However, most advanced students showed a more stabilized professional identity because they had gone through the process of negotiating among different identities from different roles and acquired sufficient disciplinary discourse skills and practices. It is worth noting that there were differences between academic program students and professional program students in terms of envisioning a future professional self because professional program students needed to go through several more milestones associated with obtaining an internship and postdoc.

Further, professional program students were required to build a dual identity (researcher and practitioner) or a fused identity (scientist-practitioner identity). However, several professional students were not interested in one side of their dual identities, so they encountered conflict as they built only one identity.

Theme 3 Conclusion. There were three components of professional identity evident in my interviews of graduate students, including professionalism, disciplinary skills development, and professional association and affiliation. First, participants identified

that the acquisition of professional skills (being professional) was an essential foundation to becoming a professional in the field. Professional skills included critical thinking, problem solving, self-regulation, and interpersonal communication skills. They saw professional attributes as developing through the graduate program by self reflection and association with others in various learning communities.

In addition, the development of professional skills was seen as a foundation of disciplinary skills development and associated with their professional identity development. Graduate students' professional identity development was related with their acquisition of disciplinary skills, including knowledge of research design, discourse practices and writing, and clinical skills. In comparing general professional proficiencies and discipline-specific skills, I saw disciplinary skills acquisition as providing a bigger impact on graduate students' professional identity. As they acquired professionalism and disciplinary practical skills, they could envision a possible professional self in their discipline. However, as one student identified, it is ideal to amalgamate both professional attributes and skills acquisition to be called as a professional.

Lastly, participation and interaction within various learning and professional groups played a significant role in developing individuals' professional identity. Students enriched their professional attributes and professional skills by associating with others in the field. Further, by participating in learning communities, they could envision a larger community of practice. In other words, professional affiliation provided a sense of community to participants, and also it allowed them to envision a future self in the professional disciplinary community.

Interestingly, participants who recognized the importance of a community of practice seemed to experience more active development of their professional identity compared to those who did not see the value of participating in a community of practice, or who had negative experiences in their community of practice. In addition, for those who did not see the value of learning communities, their individual professional identity development seemed more focused on their disciplinary skills development rather than developing social relationships with others in a disciplinary community of practice.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

This chapter described the my overall findings that organized insights into three themes including graduate students' professional identity seemed to progress through phases marked by milestones, graduate students' professional identity developed by interacting with other individuals in several learning communities and finally, last theme is graduate students forged their professional identity through their program experiences, defining their professional self as the acquisition of self-knowledge and self-regulation skills, disciplinary knowledge and skills, and envisionment of a professional future self participating in a community of practice.

Interestingly, among several different factors that influenced their professional identity development, their possible future self in a community of practice appeared as a distinctive influence. Further, graduate students' background experiences, strength, and abilities made difference in their development of professional identity and also allowed them to envision possible future professional self than enhance their professional identity. In addition, note that there were difference between professional program students and

academic program students on their professional identity development due to different requirements of each program and career trajectories.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter includes: (1) a discussion of the main findings in light of the existing literature; (2) limitations of the study; (3) implications for future research and practice; and (4) conclusion. In the first section, by considering the three major themes of the study, I highlight several findings that have the potential to contribute to the existing body of literature, then ending the section with a synthesis of the findings and insights that cut across the different themes. Before presenting a final conclusion, I address the limitations of the study and suggesting implications for practice and for research on professional identity development.

Findings and Their Connection to the Literature

There were these three major themes drawn from the data in this study. First, this study showed that graduate students' professional identity developed in phases marked by the program's required milestones such as qualifying exam, dissertation, and getting an internship. Second, graduate students' professional identity development was influenced by their associations with others in several different disciplinary learning communities. Third, graduate students' professional identity seemed forged through their program experiences as they developed disciplinary skills and came to envision a future professional self. Based on these three core themes, I will discuss core findings as they connect with the relevant literature.

Starting with the evidence that my participants were undergoing a process of developing and negotiating their identities in a first section, I then go on to discuss how

various contextual and sociocultural influences impacted students' construction of identity. Next, I introduce the ways that students' professional identity was influenced by acquiring necessary professional disciplinary knowledge and skills, including research skills, clinical skills, and discourse practices. Lastly, I discuss the ways that my participants' identity development was influenced by envisioning different possible selves. Finally, I synthesize my findings discuss themes.

Graduate Students' Identity Development Through Negotiation

Data analysis indicated that graduate students' professional identity changed over the time of their graduate programs. This change, sometimes gradual and sometimes radical, was evidenced from participants' own testimonies and my observations. Professional identity development was a continuous process of negotiation that included self-defining processes as students interacted with their socio-cultural environment created by their graduate program. As has been described before, individuals construct multiple identities that often require identity negotiation, with the possibility that one identity may get rejected (Woodruff & Schallert, 2008). In addition, Mishler (2004) claimed that identity is not a single stabilized entity that an individual acquires at one point of life; instead, one is continuously acquiring multiple identities throughout different stages of life. I saw this especially clearly with my participants who were parents who had to negotiate between being a mom or dad and being a graduate student at the same time. These students experienced a continuous process of negotiation between these two crucial roles due to limited time and energy.

In addition, the results of my study showed evidence of multiple identity negotiation. For example, the professional programs had stated goals of having students develop both as researchers and practitioners. Yet, data showed that most professional program students seemed to build a practitioner identity as a dominant identity over that of a researcher in response to much greater interest in the practitioner than researcher demands of their program. By identifying how students dealt with different identities, my results could hint at the relationship between identity negotiation and academic motivation. This finding parallels the claims of Dunkel (2000) and of Oyserman and Dustin (2001) who described identity as providing long-term motivation and direction for the achievement of desired goals. In my study, professional program students, who did not see research as relevant to their future career, may have chosen to concentrate on only the practitioner identity. In this case, as long as they fulfilled research requirements even if without acquiring fluency in research design or methodology, they could become a professional practitioner in the field. As I found, these students' motivation in research-related courses and activities was lower compared to those who aimed to be in academia in the future.

Furthermore, my findings pointed to several factors that significantly influenced my participations' professional identity development, including sufficient self-knowledge acquisition, professional attributes and skills, disciplinary skills development, and experience with various cultural artifacts through discourse practices. This process of professional identity development was aligned with findings from Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide (2014) who reported that professional identity development in the field of

counseling psychology happened progressively even as individuals were coming to accept their own identification with the profession. In addition, data showed that beginning students experienced more self-defining moments as they encountered various challenges as graduate students, including asking themselves whether they can successfully make it through the program or not, and experiencing high stress from uncertainty and imposter syndrome. This finding illustrated, but with more specificity, what Moss et al. (2014) found that professional identity development is related to the lamination of individuals' identities with the profession and academic commitment.

Overall, graduate students' professional identity development process seemed similar to the process described by Lee and Schallert (2016) who investigated pre-service teachers' identity development. In their findings, pre-service teachers also experienced self-defining moments as time passed, and they also struggled to negotiate their student and teacher identities in the beginning. My participants similarly showed evidence of identity negotiation when they had built a different professional identity from previous work or education and now needed to adopt a new student identity at the beginning of their program. In particular, my study provided more details about factors, activities, and personal struggles that influenced participants' professional identity according to their phase in their graduate program through a longitudinal investigation.

These finding are generally and ultimately aligned with Vygotsky's idea (1932) that introduced the concept of the development of identity as embedded in cultural experiences, and discourse practices as mediating tools that contribute to develop an individual's characteristics. In other words, the development of identity occurs through

the interactions individuals have with their surrounding cultures through the mediation of cultural artifacts such as discourse practices. This socio-cultural identity development process was also explained by Moje and Luke (2009) who described identity as a dynamic attribute that can be produced, generated, developed, or expressed over different situations. My study represents a contribute to conceptualizations of identity development by providing empirical evidence of multiple identity negotiation and development through particular socio-cultural experiences.

Disciplinary Community of Practice and Professional Identity Development

A second major finding of my study was to demonstrate that particular socio-cultural learning communities influenced substantially graduate students' professional identity. This finding highlighted the importance of participating in various learning communities and in actual disciplinary communities of practice. Wenger (1998) elaborated on the concept of community of practice, describing individuals' learning experiences as enhanced by informal and pervasive participation in activities that are essential to a group. Such experiences, according to Wenger, simultaneously lead to learning and to identity development. The findings of my study provided empirical evidence extending the concept of community of practice, showing that participating in the activities of a disciplinary community and interacting with others in learning communities allowed graduate students to enhance their professional skills including their professionalism, disciplinary discourse practices, and domain specific skills in research methodology and on clinical skills. In addition, participating in disciplinary learning communities encouraged students to realize they were becoming part of a larger

disciplinary community of practice, thereby influencing their professional identity development. This finding is aligned with research from Holland et al. (1998) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical formulation and provided clear evidence of the concept of community of practice from a socio-cultural perspective. Graduate school represents a particular socio-cultural learning setting in which students must peruse massive amounts of disciplinary literature and are encouraged to join professional organizations in order to contribute to the field. The result of the study showed specific examples of various disciplinary learning communities that influenced professional identity development particular of participants including the relationship between each student and his/her advisor as the smallest and most fundamental unit of a learning community, and the formal and informal learning communities formed with peer students and other professionals in the field. Data showed that these learning communities were a crucial influence on these graduate students' professional identity.

This study showed that graduate classes were not only places where students acquired domain specific knowledge but also places where they could build learning communities and where they could naturally practice their emerging disciplinary discourses. This finding is paralleled with Schallert et al.'s (2016) study about identity development in graduate level classes. They investigated identity development from online discourse analysis in one graduate seminar class. However, my study had as its scope to show the many diverse and electrifying interactions that occur over the span of a graduate program within one discipline from a longitudinal investigation. For example, data showed that various learning communities were embedded in courses (i.e., dyads

with professor, whole class, project teams, and informal study groups) and that these aided the students in acquiring disciplinary content knowledge and skills, thereby enhancing their professional identity. In other words, coursework served as a place to create formal and informal learning communities, acquire disciplinary content knowledge and skills, and practice disciplinary discourse ways that enhanced their professional identity. Coll, Doumans, Trotter, and Freeman (2013) investigated counseling classes, and they also reported that graduate coursework influenced development of professional identity development.

Finally, data showed the significance of participating in professional organizations or conferences. This professional affiliation can be seen as a magnified version of disciplinary learning communities that graduate students experienced in their graduate program. Through establishing professional affiliations, individuals seemed to envision themselves in the professional community of practice, thereby enhancing their professional identity. Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) reported that participating in professional organizations provides learning experiences about the culture of the counseling profession to counselors that in turn advances their professional identity. Similarly, I saw in my data several specific examples of relationship between influence of participating in learning communities on professional identity development. Another contribution of this study that came by way of the finding that there were differences between individuals who had participated and associated with professional disciplinary communities and those who were not able to experience disciplinary communities.

Interestingly, participants who had engaged with professional associations showed a stronger demonstration of their professional identity compared to those who had not.

Professional Identity Development Reciprocally Founded in Particular Disciplinary Skills

There were several disciplinary skills that participants identified as particularly necessary to becoming a professional in the field, and their smooth acquisition seemed critical in professional identity development. Aligned with Schallert et al. (2016) who found that students' identities sometimes "wobbled" as they learned key content in a particular discipline, my findings showed that students' motivation to acquire disciplinary knowledge and skills was reciprocally influenced by their developing professional identity. Those who were further along in their sense of a professional self had a clearer vision of what skills were required to become a professional and of their importance in their own growth. The few students who experienced struggles and seemed to reject the identity they were invited to create found it difficult to generate the commitment and effort needed to develop disciplinary skills. I saw this finding as related to Wenger's (1998) claim that when individuals are joining a community of practice, they also develop a new identity as they try to acquire the core disciplinary skills of the community. My study illustrated Wenger's claim using a longitudinal investigation that provided evidence of the significance to professional identity development of acquiring disciplinary skills in the company of other fellow learners, all at different stages of membership in the community of practice.

Again, it is important to note that academic program students and professional students had different disciplinary skills requirements, even though all students were similar in their need to develop research-related and discourse skills. Although there were common research requirements as milestones for both professional and academic students, research skills for some professional program students were not seen as strongly relevant for their future, particularly if they were choosing a practitioner-oriented career. In other words, for some students, simply doing the minimum to fulfill research requirements was enough, and they saw themselves as being able to become a professional practitioner even without being fluent in research or methodology.

This phenomenon led to an interesting professional identity development for professional students that showed how reciprocal were disciplinary activities and professional identity. For instance, some of my participants who envisioned themselves becoming independent counseling practitioners emphasized proficiency in professional skills as central to their identity as a professional counselor, whereas other students who were interested and involved in research projects identified being a professional as including both skills proficiency as well as associations with a professional group. This finding paralleled much previous professional identity research that has emphasized the development of specialized experiences, skills, and education associated with a particular field (Brott & Myers, 1999; Ibarra, 1999; Smith & Robinson, 1995).

Besides their disciplinary professional skills, my study participants shared the significance of acquiring professional attributes, skills, and discourse practices to becoming a professional in their disciplinary field. I found that those who recognized the

importance of being professional seemed actively to practice professionalism by demonstrating critical thinking, problem solving, and various self-regulation strategies including time management, self-care, emotional regulation, conflict management, and interpersonal communications skills. This finding is aligned with Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) who reported that a professional identity was associated with professionalism including critical decision making and problem solving skills. Finally, my findings showed that the training program in which these students were enrolled offered them various chances to develop them professional skills and professional attributes and skills on a trajectory to developing their professional identity. Note that my participants were in a profession in which interpersonal skills and discourse skills are perhaps more significant than in other disciplinary fields such as engineering and science.

The last and most important component of what students needed to acquire was the discourse practices of their field. Remarkably, participants in this study identified three major components to professional disciplinary discourse practice, reading, speaking, and writing, that they needed to acquire during graduate training in order to be a professional researcher and/or practitioner. Interestingly, beginning stage graduate students recognized the importance of needing to re-learn how to read as an important discourse skills whereas advanced students identified that among different professional discourse practices, writing was a core skill they needed in order to participate in the disciplinary practice community.

Bakhtin (1981) provided an explanation of the relationship between identity and discourse practices, describing how individuals are intuitively inspired to expand their

social boundaries through discourse interactions with others. Individuals acquire different perspectives and resources as they develop new identities, and individuals' identities develop and are maintained by continuing discourse processes. Reflecting on Bakhtin's (1953) conception of discourse practices as a manifestation of individual dispositions, goals, and social locations, Baxter (2004) proposed that discourse practices have the functions to express the self's beliefs and attitudes to others so that the self is understood and influenced by others' actions and beliefs. In these views, constructing a new identity as well as sustaining one's existing identities happen in concert through discourse.

My findings showed that developing such discourse practices helped these graduate students come to see themselves as a professional in the field, with all students, whether in the professional or academic programs, emphasizing the difficulties they experienced as they developed their voice as researchers. Underscoring this key outcome of graduate studies, several advanced students identified the importance of learning to write as a researcher, and they saw the many learning communities in and out of graduate school as learning grounds for practicing their newly developing discourse skills and emerging professional identities. Especially, participants testified that producing peer-reviewed manuscripts for journal publication seemed to influence substantially their professional identity as a researcher.

Lastly, my participants' perspectives on writing can be interpreted as reflecting how text represents an author's devices to help others make their way to meaning. In other words, writers convey themselves into texts to express their values, credibility, and relationship to ideas in order to influence others. This writing process shapes authors'

identities, and the produced text influences readers' identity formation. When applied to graduate students' reading and writing of published papers, proposals, or conference papers, this experience can be seen as one of ultimate identity construction as researchers. Finally, as Street (2009) claimed, academic writing involves the articulation of a particular position that is both meaningful to the writer and recognizable by readers.

The result of my study provided clear evidence of the importance of discourse practices to the development of one's professional identity. It is worth noting that it might have been difficult to find the right population to investigate the relationship between identity development and discourse practices. However, educational psychology graduate students were the appropriate population with which to show the importance of discourse practices for professional skills for a researcher or practitioner.

The Role of Envisioning One's Future Self in Students' Professional Identity Development

The last finding that I would like to highlight is that participants created their possible future self through the various graduate training experiences and associations with others in a community of practice. This finding is particularly interesting because their professional identity development seemed associated with the envisionment of a possible professional future self. Markus and Nurius (1986) explained possible selves as the representations of one's perceptions about who one might become, who one would like to become, and who one is afraid of becoming. In addition, Wurf and Markus (1991) claimed that possible selves impact individuals' personal growth in identity development,

and that the production of possible selves is a mechanism for the identity exploration process.

My findings shed light on the detailed process of how individuals' possible future self was being created and its relationship with their professional identity development. There were three major factors that influenced students' professional identity including successfully accomplishing required milestones, developing professionalism and disciplinary skills, and establishing professional associations and affiliations. This finding is aligned with Lee and Schallert (2016) who investigated preservice teachers and showed that possible selves emerge out of past social experiences and individuals' current activities creating a link from the present to the future selves. My study showed that the simultaneous interaction of disciplinary skills acquisition and successfully meeting milestone requirements is strongly associated with the envisionment of a possible professional self.

Especially, when students experienced self-defining and self-evaluation moments, particularly shown for beginning and intermediate students, they seemed not able to see through the milestones that they were soon facing, so that their imagined future could not influence the present because the "walls" were too high and too dense. In this case, students found it difficult to envision a possible professional future self because they were aware they had to go through the next "high wall." The current study showed that they often experienced a lack of motivation to study, high stress, and feelings of imposter syndrome. This finding is in line with Dunkel's (2000) study that possible selves provide long-term motivation and supply direction for the achievement of the desired goal.

Penland, Masten, Zelhart, Fournet, and Callanhan (2000) also claimed that the feared possible self may hinder academic motivation. I would add that my participants' imposter syndrome seemed related to a feared self with dread that they may not be able to succeed.

By contrast, most advanced students could better envision their future because they had overcome more walls than beginning students and had more check marks on their milestones. For instance, advanced students described a specific imagined future self (as a counselor, professor, or therapist). As students could check off milestones, they seemed to be able to allow a future self and a future professional self to influence the present positively, although there were some differences in the ability to to envision the future self.

As students accomplished their milestone tasks, most acquired a certain degree of professionalism and disciplinary skills, and their envisionment of possible professional self improved. Note that their acquisition of professionalism and professional disciplinary skills were sometimes a subtle process that they may not always have noticed. My findings showed that triggering events allowed them to notice signs of progress in themselves, and to recognize improvements in their disciplinary skills, whether these realizations happened meta-cognitively from Ah-ha moments or from acknowledgement from others. This particular phenomenon can be linked to social identity development theory that highlights the importance of identity triggering events and affinity groups (Cross, 1971; Helm, 1990; Atkinson, 1993; Phinney, 1993).

Finally, participation and interaction within various learning groups played a significant role in the development of individuals' professional identity. They enriched

their professional attributes and professional skills by associating with others in the field. Further, by participating in a learning community, they could envision a bigger community of practice. In other words, professional affiliation provided a sense of community of practice to participants and it also allowed them to envision themselves in the future in a professional disciplinary community.

Norton (2001) argued that individuals' imagined community creates imagined identities that can influence students' academic engagement and performance. Kanno and Norton (2003) posited that one's imagined community enhances learning and identity development. Second language students' affiliation with imagined communities such as through joint activities with native speakers seemed to affect their motivation to practice their emerging language skills and seemed to lead to new identity consolidation. They added that an imagined community provides a powerful vision and sense of direction as well as educational goals. However, an imagined community should not be a fantasy or withdrawal from reality but part of current identities, affecting the change or negotiation of current identities. The significance of learning communities as a place in which professionalism as well as professional disciplinary practices can be acquired.

In other words, graduate students' professional identity development and their envisioning of a future possible professional self seemed reciprocally influenced throughout their graduate training within the context of a learning community. This idea can be linked to the imagined future community and identity development that several researchers, including Norton (2001), Moje and Lewis (2007), Schallert et al. (2009), and Wenger (1998) investigated.

I saw some commonality from those advanced students who did not address their professional identity nor possible future self. In their responses to my interview questions, they seemed to lack confidence about their professional disciplinary skills, whether clinical, assessment, research, and writing skills. They did not seemed connected to others in their program or professional disciplinary community. Contrastingly, those who described their future community of practice or professional self seemed to be more connected to their disciplinary field and had some level of confidence in their professional disciplinary skills, showing the association of professional skills development and professional affiliation and socialization and the envisionment of a future self.

Lastly, it is worth noting that there were difference between academic program students and professional program students in terms of envisioning a future professional self because professional program students seemed to face several more milestones such as internships and postdocs. In other words, there were different reasons why professional program students and academic program students experienced difficulty in seeing the future over the "walls" represented by milestones. For professional program students, they needed to get over high hurdles positioned at the end of their program such as finding an internship, establishing postdoctoral positions, and passing licensure exams. For academic program students, the hurdles that they needed to get over seemed lower and fewer than professional program students. However, for these students, it was career choices that seemed to limit their vision. In other words, most academic program students wanted to become professors in academic positions but they were well aware that those

opportunities were very limited, and they were not yet clear what other options they had. In sum, all of these factors seemed to reflect students' envisionment of a possible future self that seemed another strong influence on students' professional identity development.

Limitations

As with any study, this one had limitations, with three that are relatively more important: (a) limitations came from restrictions on the sample; (b) limitations due to restrictions on my resources; and (c) limitations arose from the fact that I was a fellow student to the participants. First, because participants were recruited from one disciplinary field, results need to be applied and generalized with caution, as the process of professional identity formation may differ to different degrees in different disciplinary practices such as engineering, performing arts, and liberal studies. Second, because this study was a graduate student independent dissertation project, I faced limitations of time, ability, and energy for one person to conduct interviews, participate in social gatherings, transcribe interview data, and analyze data by myself.

Finally, a certain degree of researcher bias must be acknowledge as be another limitation for this study. As I mentioned in the section on researcher subjectivity, interpretations of participants' experiences may be colored by perspectives that I have built from interacting with them as a friend. In addition, because the main data source came from interviews, participants' moods on their emotional response to certain topics at that moment may have influenced what they told me. For example, if a student was experiencing a bad day, it may have affected his/her testimonies about certain aspects of the program during the interview. However, despite these limitations, my hope is that this

study can contribute to a better understanding of identity development in general and professional identity of graduate students in particular.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

In considering the results of this study, there are several implications for educational psychology graduate students, faculty members, educational psychology department administrators, and graduate counselors, and professional organizations.. First, graduate students are provided with a description of the process of professional identity development in the results of this study. Knowing that graduate students at each phase face similar strugglings may comfort them. They will be encouraged to participate in both formal and informal social gatherings to overcome any sense of imposter syndrome and burnout. Further, the results of this study contribute to the literature by highlighting the importance that participating in professional conferences can build professional relationships with other professionals in the field as well as acquiring professional knowledge. When students participate in professional conferences to present their studies and meet other scholars in the field, they naturally experience various identity electrifying events while building professional relationships with other individuals in the field, presenting their studies as a contribution to the community of practice, and practicing professional disciplinary discourse with others. The results of this study provided clear evidence about the significance of professional affiliations to developing professional identity.

As for suggestions for implications for future studies, the progression of professional identity development can be seen through case studies. The nature of case

study research allows for more detailed and nuanced description of individuals' professional identity development by identifying positive influences and hindrances. Further, a focus group study could provide verification of certain factors of professional identity, especially professional socialization and affiliation factors. In addition, based on the information from this qualitative study, professional identity measures can be developed for quantitative investigations so that research on factors predicting professional identity development can occur. For example, the relationship between academic motivation of educational psychology graduate students and their professional identity development can be shown through quantitative data.

Conclusion to Chapter 5

This study was an investigation of educational psychology doctoral students' professional identity development. I attempted to provide a clearer view of the overall picture of the process of professional identity development, including what factors are influencing one's professional identity development as well as possible future self in a community of practice. Results of this study were presented in three themes showing the influence on one's professional identity development: a) how educational psychology graduate students allowed their prior work and academic experiences to influence their current graduate work and their professional identity development; b) how their present activities such as coursework, practicum, and research participation may allow them to envision a future self; and c) how graduate milestones, like qualifying exams or dissertation proposal defense, can be seen as a "wall" that one must get over to be able to envision a possible professional self in the future.

Another contribution of this study is that different influences on graduate students' professional identity development became evident. Generalizable professional skills seemed more subtle and foundational for the other two factors, professional skills acquisition and professional affiliation. The development of professional disciplinary skills including disciplinary discourse practices appeared as a core contributor for students' professional identity development. However, individuals who developed both professional skills and professional affiliation seemed to have a strong professional identity.

In sum, this study highlighted the process involved in educational psychology students' professional identity development and how identity was forged throughout their graduate training. As graduate students gained a professional identity through the process, they seemed more motivated to participate in their community of practice, and motivated to take on their academic responsibilities.

Appendix A: Sample interview questions

In line with qualitative methodology (e.g, Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Creswell & Brown, 1992), questions should begin with general queries, so as not to prime interviewees' responses by asking specific questions. However, the following sample questions were used as a guide to explore the different elements and phases of professional identity development of educational psychology graduate students.

General identity

How do you introduce yourself to others?

Can you tell me about who you are?

What were you doing before joining this graduate program?

What other roles do you have beside being a graduate student?

Can you tell me about your graduate school life?

What milestones of graduate school have you completed so far?

What obstacles did you have to overcome in graduate school?

How do you think those obstacles influenced you?

Professional identity

Can you tell me about your professional identity?

Can you define what professional identity is in your own words?

What does it mean for you to be a professional in the field?

What experience so far has contributed to your professional identity and why?

What experiences have resonated with you as a professional in the field and why?

What kind of professional skills do you think you need to acquire?

Do you personally know any professional individuals in the field?

Future plans and possible self

What is your short term plan?

What is your future plan?

How do you envision yourself in your field?

What kind of career would you like to have after graduation?

Extra (for professional program participants)

How do you see yourself as a researcher? as a practitioner?

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